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Educational Social Justice Agnostic to Zealot: One White Male Elementary Principal's Journey

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE AGNOSTIC TO ZEALOT: ONE WHITE MALE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL'S JOURNEY, by JAMIE C. HITZGES, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE AGNOSTIC TO ZEALOT: ONE WHITE MALE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL'S JOURNEY

by

Jamie Hitzges

Under the Direction of Sheryl Cowart Moss, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

I failed my students as a first-time principal. By not speaking up for students on the margins, I was complicit in maintaining a status quo that was morally and educationally reprehensible. As a second-time principal, I attempted to rectify challenges from my first principalship and to lead in a culturally responsive and socially just way. This autoethnography explored how culturally responsive and socially just leadership is manifested in practice. Using vignettes, I presented data detailing my process as I learned to practice culturally responsive social justice leadership. Next, I analyzed and categorized the vignettes to find meaning based on adjectival categories that emerged as the data were thematized. My analysis utilized Noddings' Caring Theory to arrive at deeper meaning. Based on the extant literature, adjectival categorization, and Caring Theory conceptual analysis, this autoethnography sought to provide insight into one principal's attempts to lead in a culturally responsive and socially just manner.

My findings were: historical and present context matter in leading a school, Culturally Responsive Social Justice Leadership (CRSJL) moved from individual conversations to whole-school action, and the efforts to be a CRSJL exacted an emotional toll, required persistence, and proved that the change process was difficult.

INDEX WORDS: Culturally Responsive Social Justice Leadership, Caring Theory, Vulnerability, Autoethnography, Marginalized Students

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful bride, Laurie, and to my brave children, Casey and Colin. Without their love and support, I would have never made it this far. As the product of brokenness, I have emerged into the light and torn down the walls that had held me back. Even when my family said nothing and watched me struggle with this dissertation (and, perhaps, thought that I was cracking up), they were always there pushing me forward. After all, I love them and wanted to make something of myself and, in turn, make them proud. What great motivation!

I would also like to dedicate this work to all the children I have ever had the pleasure to meet as a teacher or educational leader. You are the reason that I do what I do. You bring me joy and a vicarious lived experience of youth and wonder. I want the world to be so much better for you. It is the productive struggle that creates the breakthrough, but that comes with teachers and leaders who understand what to do to make that happen. I believe that this work is built around and through productive struggle and that, anyone can achieve beyond what is expected. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Ms. Billings. You were my Power of One! You recognized something in me that I did not see in myself. As a teacher, you showed your faith in me. Through a seemingly small act, you altered the course of my life when you nominated me for a community college scholarship. That act changed the trajectory of my life, and I aspire to serve because of you.

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1 EXPLORING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

For many, education provides hope of changing the social construct for those who have less. The world would be a better place if all children received a fair and decent education (Reed Jr et al., 2004). Many visionaries, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., fought hard and long to eliminate injustice and inequity and to create a better society. Although they have multiple reasons, many teachers and administrators enter the field of education with a desire to combat inequality and to alleviate oppression and injustice inherent in the social arrangement of the United States (Freire, 1970). These educators often believe that all students can succeed despite their wide-ranging backgrounds (Bogotch, 2000; K. M. Brown, 2010; Delpit, 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; Dweck, 2006; Freire, 1970; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Shields, 2009; Theoharis, 2007; Valenzuela, 2010; Webb, 2010).

For many years, the United States exhibited a disregard for non-White students. This inequity was made clear by the Supreme Court in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). In *Plessy*, the Court held that the doctrine of "separate but equal" as applied to Black U.S. citizens was lawful. Under *Plessy*, which was subsequently applied to schools, local governments established a system of subpar inequitable schools for students of color; this structure continued through the middle of the 20th century and continues until now (Ayscue & Orfield, 2015; DeMatthews, 2018; Freire, 1970; Noddings, 2015). Starting with the 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka,* extending to the Civil Rights Movement and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and to the days of desegregation, the momentum gathered to address inequities in educational settings that were inherent in the social fabric of the

United States. During those times, the idea that anyone, regardless of social standing, could aspire to gain upward mobility with an education was an American dream that undergirded the changing societal structure.

Fast-forwarding to the current day, laws have evolved to reinforce the efforts of the Civil Rights leaders of the 1960s; yet, numerous divides still separate schools by race, ethnicity, and economic status. According to many researchers, the principalship holds the key to sustaining cultural and instructional change within a schoolhouse (Anderson, 2008; DeMatthews, 2018; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, 2000; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2015). I am a middle class, Christian, White male principal attempting to lead a largely comprised White faculty and staff, in a high poverty, Hispanic school, in a culturally responsive and socially just manner. Against this backdrop, my study delved into the role of the principal. A self-narrative, in the form of an autoethnography, served as the vehicle to parse out the subcultures, contexts, and circumstances via a study of my lived experiences as the researcher and as a White male elementary school principal.

Background of the researcher and topic.

I am.

I am: husband, father, brother, friend.

I am: White male.

I am privileged by my skin.

I am: principal, teacher, assistant superintendent, senior business planning analyst.

I am: desperately poor, middle class, upper class.

I am: the husband of a Cuban wife and father of two bicultural children.

I am: uncle to 10 bicultural nephews and nieces and three multiracial nephews and nieces.

I am: White trailer trash.

I am: the only White kid in an all-African-American classroom.

I am: beaten and mugged, called “Cracker,” “Honky.”

I am: son of deceased father; from Hepatitis C.

I am: son of deceased homosexual mother; from lupus and darkness.

I am: little brother of deceased older brother; from alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver.

I am: father of an amputee son, caused by accidental hunting shotgun blast.

I am childhood: brokenness, incestuous sexual abuse, alcohol and drug consumption.

I am: the product of public education.

I am: the result of many teachers, but mostly one.

I am: second-time principal.

I am: journeying towards equity for the marginalized.

I am: hopeful.

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that seeks to find and expand on the lived experience of the self (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). This autoethnography focused on my perceptions, as a White male principal, as I attempted to lead my elementary school in a culturally responsive and socially just manner. This study was situated in a majority poor, highly Hispanic, culturally linguistically diverse school with a majority White female teaching population. As a White male in power, I am cognizant of my positionality and the role that I play in reducing opportunity gaps that exist for marginalized students. I am also aware that, as a White male in a leadership role, I have influence that can either favor or hinder equality and fairness.

My experiences as an abused, poor student will serve as background knowledge that I called upon and shared with the teachers with whom I work and others who read this study as I sought to lead in a way that is aligned with Culturally Responsive Social Justice Leadership (CRSJL). In the context of a school, *culture* refers to the spoken and unspoken rules that color and influence every facet of how a school operates (Khalifa et al., 2016). CRSJL is an amalgamation of both culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) and social justice leadership (SJL). The focus of CRSL is leading a school in a manner—in both belief and practice—that meets the needs of diverse learners. SJL is an approach based on recognizing existing unjust school structures and doing something to correct the injustice. In my definition, a culturally responsive social justice leader seeks to meet the needs of diverse learners and addresses unjust structures and practices.

This study looked through the theoretical framework lens of Caring Theory put forth by Nel Noddings (Noddings, 2006). Caring Theory takes the work of Dewey and Freire and pulls in an ethic and centers of care to reform education into a structure that builds around educational progressivism, constructionism, and humanism (Noddings, 2015). For me, the intersection of leading a highly diverse school in a culturally responsive social justice manner and my experiences as a marginalized student came at an appropriate time.

Several epiphanies instigated my desire to approach autoethnography through the topic of CRSJL as a sitting principal (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In my first experience as a principal, I did not take a culturally responsive social justice advocacy role. Instead, I was an agnostic. My belief in advocating for marginalized students did not come to the surface as action. I suppressed my feelings and past because of fear and an unbending shame. Deep down, I have always believed that education has the potential to create a just society through a transformation of the

educational system that recognizes disadvantaged structures and changes those structures accordingly (Freire, 1970). Further still, as a principal, I desired to lead in a manner that corrected unjust structures, thereby providing the ideal situation for all students to achieve their fullest potential, unencumbered by burdens of race, culture, language, disability, or socioeconomic status (SES) (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

Achievement, discipline, and opportunity gaps exist between White and minority students throughout the nation (K. M. Brown, 2010; Delpit, 2006; DeMatthews, 2016, 2018; Scanlan & López, 2014). Why is this the case? Are our school cultures creating hurdles for our marginalized students? Within autoethnographies, the intersection of self and culture creates an opportunity to look reflexively, with a desire, to make sense of what is happening within cultural phenomena. This study addressed the gaps in the literature regarding the "how to" go about leading a school in a culturally responsive and socially just manner. There is a lack of connection between existing literature on culturally responsive school leadership and literature about social justice leadership. The topics of social justice and cultural responsiveness are typically approached independently of each other (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa, 2011; Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2018). I, however, will combine those two topics because they are not mutually exclusive and fit together under a Caring Theory approach (Noddings, 2015). Caring Theory addresses the cultural, practical, curricular, and pedagogical approaches that support culturally responsive and socially just schools (Marshall, Rogers, & Steele, 1996; Noddings, 2015).

Guiding Questions

Through autoethnography, I used this study to explore my perceptions as I sought to lead a predominantly poor Hispanic elementary school in a culturally responsive and socially just

manner. As a principal in a school with a historically highly marginalized student population, investigating autoethnographic perceptions of CRSJL required me to understand the contextual situation of the school with the mindset of deliberate change of approach. To accomplish this, I proposed the following questions:

1. How are my practices as a culturally responsive social justice leader manifested in the school?
2. What challenges did I face as I attempted to cultivate a culturally responsive social justice school climate in a culturally and linguistically diverse Hispanic environment?

Review of the Literature

School leaders are critical to influencing school culture (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). School culture can directly impact how teachers respond to and approach their students. Research has established that culturally responsive teachers are critical for minority student success (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Viewed holistically, school leaders can impact a school's achievement via their approach to culture (Khalifa et al., 2016). Cultural linguistic diversity will continue to grow in the United States based on the shifting demographics that result from immigration and decreased White birth rates (Scanlan & López, 2014). Based on the increase in diversity among students, it is essential that CRSJL be considered as an approach to mitigate the achievement gap (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

Student demographics in the United States reflect a majority of White students but have been shifting to more minority students, particularly Hispanics (Boske, Osanloo, & Newcomb, 2017; Scanlan & López, 2014). Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Hispanic students represent a large portion of these students (Scanlan & López, 2014). The pending population change by 2035, coupled with the fact that minority CLD students have traditionally

underperformed their White peers, compels further investigation as to how educators can close the achievement gap (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Statistically, the majority of teachers and administrators in the United States are White females (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016). As such, when facing the difficulty of meeting the needs of diverse populations, meeting the cultural needs of the CLD population can be a struggle. Studies have found that cultural consideration of the minoritized student population can help students perform better academically (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Specific to this study, an elementary principal in one northeastern rural Georgia county school comprised mostly of CLD Hispanic students will address the needs of CRSJL.

This literature review will start with an investigation of the context surrounding culturally responsive social justice leadership via an investigation of the following:

- Caring Theory,
- educational policy at a school level,
- the role of the principal,
- social justice leadership,
- social justice principal practices,
- culturally responsive school leadership,
- the history of multicultural education,
- academic considerations of marginalized culturally linguistically diverse Hispanic students,
- culturally responsive pedagogy,
- caring in school leadership,
- resilience,

- Whiteness and White male privilege,
- Critical Race Theory,
- mindfulness,
- compassion,
- empathy, and
- autoethnography and CRSJL.

To position me as the researcher—a White male principal—in the study, a closer investigation of topics is warranted to further present the ideas around leading a school in a culturally responsive and socially just manner.

Caring theory.

Nel Noddings posed the Caring Theory as a way to approach education in a way that cares for our students. This disruptive, caring approach runs much deeper than feelings. Caring Theory is derived from Progressivism (Dewey, 1902), Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2000), and Feminist Theory (Daly, 1973). The essence of Noddings' approach to Caring Theory centers on the idea that education should not be one-size-fits-all. Rather, education should be individualized in a way that fosters "thoughtful citizens, competent parents, faithful friends, capable workers, generous neighbors and lifelong learners" (Noddings, 2006, p. 339). Noddings asserts that teachers should take the time to understand what motivates their students (Noddings, 2015), and standardization should be questioned to determine why certain decisions are made based on a uniform approach to teaching and learning.

At the root of Caring Theory is an explicit relationship between the teacher and student. The relationship involves an exchange of speaking, listening, and responding. Noddings (2015) asserted that caring occurs when the cared-for (i.e., student) recognizes the care that is shared by

the caregiver (i.e., teacher) . Without an established caring relationship between student and teacher, there is liable to be little intrinsic student motivation for learning (Noddings, 2006). To facilitate caring, Noddings proposes an educational approach arranged around themes of care (Noddings, 2015), stating: “All students should be engaged in a general education that guides them in caring for self, intimate others, global others, plants, animals, and the environment, the human-made world, and ideas” (p. 173). Noddings argues further that themes of care lead to both a moral life and intellectual success.

Four components are necessary to practice a moral approach to education: modeling, practice, dialogue and confirmation. First, *modeling* requires a demonstration of how to care from teacher to student. Second, *dialogue* requires open-ended conversation. Next, *practice* is associated with experiences in caring. Finally, *confirmation* seeks and affirms the efforts to care within the classroom. Noddings (2015) states, “I want to suggest that caring is the very bedrock of all successful schooling” (p. 27). For the sake of this study, Caring Theory will be examined as a theoretical framework that will overlay my experience as a principal attempting to lead in a culturally responsive and socially just manner.

Definition of culturally responsive social justice leadership.

Culturally Responsive Social Justice Leadership (CRSJL) is a combination of Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) and Social Justice Leadership (SJL). The primary definition for SJL comes from the work of Theoharis (2007), who stated, “I define social justice leadership to mean that these principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision” (p. 223). The definition for CRSL is provided by Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016): “We highlight practices and actions,

mannerisms, policies, and discourses that influence school climate, school structure, teacher efficacy, or student outcomes" (p. 1274). CRSL is an approach to leading, specifically focused on the principal, at a school level that embraces the removal of barriers for minority students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

I define CRSJL to mean the practices of an educational leader who invites the experiences of the voiceless minority, people of lower socioeconomic status, culturally linguistically diverse, disabled, or discriminated others into the conversation of how best to meet the needs of marginalized students (Berkovich, 2014; K. M. Brown, 2004; Cavanagh, Vigil, & Garcia, 2014; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Gay, 2010; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Ladson-Billings, 1995c; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2009; Scanlan & López, 2014; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Sleeter, 2001, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Wang, 2018). A CRSJL exhibits a caring approach that recognizes the perspectives and backgrounds of faculty and staff, students, families, and the community as the school seeks to educate students in a manner that considers the best way to promote their learning (DeMatthews, 2018; Noddings, 2015). A CRSJL engages in open dialogue within the school, community, and school district in a manner that reveals barriers to learning for marginalized minority students (DeMatthews, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). This leader exemplifies the courage to speak about matters that run counter to the dominant White-centric educational experience (McIntosh, 2012; Yosso, 2005). A CRSJL acts to rectify wrongs; to facilitate for all students in her school, the leader removes barriers and procures resources as needed (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

Educational policy at a school level.

According to Cooper, Fusarelli, and Randall (2004), the definition of policy is: "a political process where needs, goals, and intentions are translated into a set of objectives, laws, policies, and programs, which in turn affect resource allocations actions and outputs, which are the basis for evaluation reforms and new policies" (p. 3). Further, policy consists of tools, targets, and goals that are meant to be enacted in certain places by certain people (Honig, 2006). Typically, policy makers create, abolish, or modify policy based on a perceived driving need (B. S. Cooper, Fusarelli, Lance D., Randall, E. Vance, 2004; Schneider & Ingram, 1990; Smylie & Evans, 2006). Depending on the proposal, the changes will be either supported or rejected by people who endorse or oppose the goals. While policy from federal, state, and local levels impact school systems and schools, this study is centered on policymaking at a school level.

The work of Cooper et al. (2004) presented a four-dimensional view of policy theory that placed ethics and social justice in the center of the decision-making lens of policy. People, interests, goals, and organization of policy are integral to policy implementation (B. S. Cooper, Fusarelli, Lance D., Randall, E. Vance, 2004). CRSL calls on leaders, namely principals, to promote an inclusive school climate for minority students by linking the school to the community and providing professional learning for faculty and staff (Khalifa et al., 2016). Rooted within CRSL is an undergirding of a social justice leadership focus that seeks to change specific behaviors of faculty and staff within the schoolhouse that have purposefully or accidentally contributed to an oppressive practice (Bogotch, 2000; K. M. Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Social justice leadership within CRSL, is a disruption and rearrangement of structures that allow the marginalized minority students to escape exclusion (Gewirtz, 1998; Theoharis, 2007).

In the context of policy creation, the people involved in creating, implementing and monitoring policy are essential in educational realms (Mintrom, 2001; Odden, 1991; Plank & Boyd, 1994; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2006; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). As school leaders investigating perceptions of CRSJL, policy-makers must be willing to examine the school's contextual situation relative to incorporating inclusive practices for a majority Hispanic student body. Based on what is learned, those leaders must be willing to change constructs as necessary. In facilitating change or school policy, it is critical—as has been researched in both business and education research—to consider social capital between faculty, staff, students, and community (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005a; Honig, 2006; Smylie & Evans, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Social capital in educational policy implementation is grounded in relationships and is an intangible resource that can be drawn upon to successfully enact change (DeMatthews, 2018; Smylie & Evans, 2006). Successful or failed relationships amongst policy creators and implementers are based on trust, communication, and expectations (Malen, 2010). If both social capital and relationships are important in policy creation and implementation, then deliberate professional learning that centers on CRSJL topics, should be communicated, explained, and endorsed by all within the school. Schema (i.e., the backgrounds of faculty, staff, and administration) need to be considered as professional learning plans are developed (B. S. Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004; Corcoran & Goertz, 2005; Spillane et al., 2006; Weiss, 1999).

The role of the principal.

Scholars have indicated that the role of the principal is vital to the success of schools (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Particularly the principal is deemed as critical within the focus of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leaders have many qualities that can be associated with social justice leadership as well as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; DeMatthews, 2018; Hooper & Bernhardt, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007). Transformational and social justice leadership have many overlapping components. In both approaches, a principal could be seen as an inspiring, motivating, engaging, and empowering leader that strives to create caring and equitable educational environments for marginalized students as well to leverage assets of the community by leading faculty and staff (Bass, 1985; Hooper & Bernhardt, 2016; Noddings, 2015).

Balancing the theoretical, philosophical, and pragmatic applications as a culturally responsive, transformational, caring, and socially just principal is critical to success in a complex school structure. A principal must be able to inspire faculty and staff to move in the desired direction (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Building trust in a school setting.

Researchers have found that building trust among teachers and principals contributes to school reform (Brewster, Railsback, & Northwest Regional Educational Lab, 2003; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). To build a climate that facilitates the closure of opportunity gaps for minority students, a principal must change the dominant White euro-centric construct (Delpit, 2006; McIntosh, 2012; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Valenzuela, 2010; Yosso, 2005). This reform is difficult to conduct in schools with mostly White teachers. To establish trust, principals need to create an environment high in trust via leadership practices that exemplify competence,

consistency, openness, respect, and integrity (Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Further, and aligned with the Caring theoretical lens of this study, communicating, valuing dissenting views, and showing care for teachers has also been proven to increase trust within a school (Brewster et al., 2003; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). It is critical to this study for the researcher to understand the contribution of trust-building by a CRSJL to changing existing structures.

Social justice leadership.

An understanding of social justice theory helps explain why this study is a worthwhile undertaking. Social justice theory evolved from the days of classical Greek philosophers to the modern day (Berkovich, 2014; Jost & Kay, 2010). Ideas of justice have shifted an elite exclusive right to a social contract that perceived wrongs should be corrected (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007). Fundamentally, the theory emphasizes that societies must treat citizens in a fair and equitable manner. Moreover, if inequity is evident, it is imperative that a change must be made to correct that inequity (Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2000; Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007; Jost & Kay, 2010; Rawls, 1971; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Additionally, as to the notion of rectifying inequities, Capeheart (2007) stated: "Social justice is concerned not in the narrow focus of what is just for the individual alone, but what is just for the social whole" (2007, p. 22). Moreover, in the absence of justice, some form of change should occur. Rawls (1971), in his seminal work, *A Theory of Justice*, provided the following crucial definition on social justice:

> Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. (p. 3)

Social justice leadership in an educational setting can bring inequalities to light. Education has seen a growing focus on social justice leadership used to address inequalities (Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2000; K. M. Brown, 2004; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Jost & Kay, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Wang, 2018). Social justice theory has evolved through the years; in summary, the core principle is that society is obligated to ensure fairness, through political process or other policies and actions, for all members. Jost and Kay (2011) defined social justice theory as follows: "a state of affairs in which … procedures, norms, and rules that govern political and other forms of decision making preserve the basic rights, liberties and entitlements of individuals" (p. 1122). While social justice has been a focus of many scholars, they have paid most attention to it at the school level (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Recently, research has sought to determine how to move from a microlevel of addressing social justice leadership to a macrolevel via a more holistic approach (Berkovich, 2014). Based on the theory of social justice, examination of the approach of culturally responsive leaders is a valid consideration. Bogotch (2002) stated, "Social justice, just like education, is a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of power" (p. 2).

Social justice principal practices.

In discussing the role of the principal as a leader of social justice, Wang (2018) stated, "Efforts to better understand the nature of social justice leadership would do well to begin with a focus on the characteristics of leaders and the specific actions that leaders take to achieve their social justice goals" (p. 490). Moving from a theoretical to pragmatic view of social justice leadership is one of the areas of focus for this study. As the researcher and a principal, the review of literature on social justice leadership practices is important. There are many social leadership

actions that a principal can take to promote equality in the school setting. The following methods will be explained further: (a) rejecting social justice neutrality, (b) hiring, retaining and professionally developing teachers, (c) leading family and community engagement, (d) managing situational awareness, and (e) practicing self-care.

Rejecting social justice neutrality.

In rejecting neutrality, DeMatthews (2018) stated, "Principals must shed the idea that school leadership is neutral, take a stance against social injustices within schools and in communities, and partner with families to transform their schools" (p. 115). The call to action in SJL is a move away from positivist thought to a more humanistic critical theoretical frame that calls upon principals to lead in a way that makes sense of the dilemmas caused by intersections of society, culture, and school. In rejecting neutrality, an SJL places herself in a position to question unfair practices and policies. Theoharis Once practice and policies are challenged, a principal must then advocate for the implementation of corrective measures and a modified approach to issues centered on race, gender, culture, and other characteristics of identity (K. M. Brown, 2004; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Wang, 2018).

Hiring, training, and professionally developing teachers.

Facilitation of professional development is a necessary task for any principal who is an SJL (Theoharis, 2007). Many teachers do not have the prerequisite training to address diversity (Snyder et al., 2016). During undergraduate teacher preparation coursework, caution and worry often perpetuate the taboo of speaking about race and injustice between university professor and students to, and between students (McIntosh, 2012). A principal should facilitate professional learning regarding race and address the following race myths: bootstrap, individual faults,

educability, and culture of poverty (DeMatthews, 2018). The bootstrap myth states that any student, regardless of race, class, gender, or other identity, can succeed by pulling oneself up by the bootstraps (DeMatthews, 2018). The individual faults myth adheres to the notion that poverty is a choice. The root of the educability myth centers on claims that poor and minority families are at fault for poor educational performance. Last, in the culture of poverty myth, students are associated with poor behavior and limited ability because of their socioeconomic status (SES). Additionally, research shows that minority students are more likely to have an inexperienced or unqualified teacher (Ayscue & Orfield, 2015). Teacher turnover is an issue in higher SES schools because, with the pressures on schools to succeed, many school districts and principals have pushed teachers to implement one-size-fits-all curricular programs. An SJL has the responsibility to address this issue at a school level with professional development.

Leading family and community engagement.

Engaging families and the broader community provides opportunities for students and the school to come together (Theoharis, 2007). This school-supported opportunity communicates that the school places value in the students' cultural backgrounds. That connection can foster collaboration for racial, economic, environment and cultural justice. In addition, an understanding of the context of school neighborhoods helps to frame some of the decisions that a principal might make. Within the community, advocacy based on action and communication can help build broad-based support that can change the narrative of lower SES neighborhoods.

Managing situational awareness.

An SJL must also practice what DeMatthews (2018) terms *situational awareness*. This awareness can be related to Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames (i.e., the practice of exploring and then knowing how to navigate the political, human resource, structural, and symbolic frames

within an organization). As DeMatthews (2018) noted, there are perils in pushing against the status quo, especially as it relates to race, power, and equity. In essence, a principal should be aware of and sensitive to multiple perspectives when trying to lead in a socially just manner. DeMatthews stated it in this way: "Situational awareness requires both an accurate reading of the school context as well as the external forces that may be beyond the principal's control" (p. 141).

Practicing self-care.

The principal must serve in a manner that is, at times, ideologically and diametrically opposed to the organization for which the principal works, knowing that this approach could be job-threatening. Being an SJL is sometimes stressful and exhausting work. Nevertheless, a principal must maintain emotional, mental, and physical well-being (Theoharis, 2009).

Culturally responsive school leadership.

Culturally responsive school leadership was defined by Khalifa et al. (2016) as: "the need for children's educators and educational contexts to understand, respond, incorporate, accommodate, and ultimately celebrate the entirety of the children they serve –including their languages and literacies, spiritual universes, cultures, racial proclivities, behaviors, knowledges, critical thought and appearances" (p. 1277). Critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, culturally responsive and inclusive environments, and engaging students and parents in community contexts comprise the actions of a CRSL.

Critical self-awareness and critical consciousness are both used in the literature to describe a similar attribute of a CRSL (K. M. Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2003; Freire, 2000; Khalifa et al., 2016; Shields, 2010). Critical self-awareness is borne out of self-reflection that is derived from one's history, culture, desires and interests when it comes to serving marginalized students (K. M. Brown, 2004). Through this awareness, and reflection of one's own context, self-directed

learning can take place. The research indicates that practicing, developing and using this skill is important to a CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy are used interchangeably in the extant literature (Shields, 2010; Sleeter, 2012). Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has shifted from a teacher initiative to a leadership focus (Gay, 1994; Khalifa et al., 2016). Yet still, to be a CRSL requires having teachers prepared to instruct in a manner that promotes success for diverse learners (Sleeter, 2001). In order to facilitate this preparation a leader should provide and be involved in professional learning on the nature and practices of culturally responsive curricula (Gay, 2010). Khalifa et al. (2016) made the argument that since Leithwood found that effective principals are instructional leaders, then they stated "[W]e argue principals must play a leading role in maintaining cultural responsiveness in their schools" (p. 1281).

Leadership, mostly through the representation of principals, is vital to promoting a culturally respectful and inclusive school (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa et al., 2016). The word "responsive" in CRSL also indicates a nuanced approach that requires action (Khalifa et al., 2016). While recruiting and hiring minority teachers is the most direct route to culturally responsive school environments (Santamaría, 2014), the fact is that minorities are underrepresented in the workforce (Snyder et al., 2016). With that as the backdrop, leaders can fill a critical role in fostering CRSL to meet the needs of students from different cultures.

A CRSL considers, invites and involves the students, parents, and community in the school (Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016). Additionally, a CRSL principal establishes warm and respectful dialogue with the culturally diverse parent populations (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2009). This dialogue allows relationships to flourish between all school stakeholders. These

relationships allow for a change of power dynamics that include those that were on the margins to take a place at the table of discussions regarding neighborhood, school and other community-based causes (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Leadership for social justice is integral to CRSL (Khalifa et al., 2016; Santamaría, 2014). Yet, the word "responsive" in CRSL also indicates a nuanced approach that requires action to recognize, incorporate, and celebrate marginalized cultures (Khalifa et al., 2016). For leaders to achieve the end-goals of CRSL, they should approach academic achievement equity by supporting teachers (Santamaría, 2014). When referencing the imperative of addressing CRSL, Khalifa et al. (2016) stated, "Given the gravity of the topic—and the inequities that continue, despite the pervasiveness of instructional, transformational, and other forms of school leadership—this one is timely" (p. 1278). The extant research points to the need to change the way that school leaders approach culture in order to create a more equitable academic environment for a growing culturally and linguistically diverse population (Delpit, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016; Scanlan & López, 2014; Valenzuela, 2010). Further still, and most important to this study, research indicates that the connection between caring and CRSL is inherent and critical to the success of students of color (Garza, 2009; Garza & Soto Huerta, 2014).

History of multicultural education post *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Civil Rights Movement and desegregation of schools during the 1960s created a challenge: how to move away from a White euro-centric instructional approach when handling an influx of minority students into previously White-dominated schools (Banks, 2008; DeMatthews, 2018). As schools were forced to integrate minorities and CLD students, the focus was to assimilate the students into the mainstream White world. Often, the students were punished for using their native tongues in class or for adhering to adhering to customs and rituals

from their cultural background (Scanlan & López, 2014; Valenzuela, 2010). There have been increased claims that, moving through the 1960s forward to the current day, minority students' culture should be acknowledged (Banks, 2008). Incorporation of non-native approaches to CLD and minorities began to grow throughout the late 20th century. Culturally responsive teaching gained momentum based on the premise that identified CLD and minority students deserve a connection between school and home cultures (Banks, 2008; Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

With increased focus on integrating minority students after *Brown*, policymakers deployed numerous racially explicit policies to privilege the ruling Whites (DeMatthews, 2018; Wang, 2018). Gerrymandering, zoning, and gentrification have resulted in greater segregation since the late 1980s (DeMatthews, 2018). A market-based approach to education resulted from the publication of *A Nation at Risk (A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform, 1983).* With the proclamation that a failing educational structure was the main cause for the poorly equipped workforce and the subsequent economic decline in the United States, an efficiency-, accountability-based model was touted as a necessary remedy to fix what was broken. Various permutations of high-stakes testing and accountability have persisted since the 1990s; yet, the achievement gap between Whites and non-Whites continues. The role of the high-stakes, market-based school system's principal is challenged by DeMatthews (2018): "Many principals blindly lead in ways that are authoritarian, hierarchical and businesslike even though these approaches have rarely yielded positive and long-term results" (p. 67). The context of education after *Brown v. Board of Education* is essential to consider in the study of CRSJL.

Academic considerations of marginalized, CLD Hispanic students.

DeMatthews (2018) argues that for a principal to lead a school towards social justice, it is critical for the principal to understand the context of the school. As such, the focus on the

historical and present conditions of marginalized minority students—particularly Hispanics—is warranted. According to Nguyen and Kebede (2017), "In 2014, approximately 28% of 42.4 million foreign-born immigrants were from Mexico" (p. 722). *Marginalized* students are defined as: non-White, poor, speakers of other languages and with cultural differences as compared to the majority White euro-centric students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Sleeter, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011; Valenzuela, 2010). Traditionally, minorities have not performed as well on standardized tests and other measures as their White counterparts (Shields, 2009; Snyder et al., 2016). Also, the rate of discipline is disproportionate for minorities as compared to their White peers (DeMatthews, 2016; Sleeter, 2012).

Practically speaking, U.S. Census projections indicate that by the year 2035, Whites will move from a majority to a minority position in the United States population (Scanlan & López, 2014). With ethnic and racial diversification increasing within schools, recognizing and understanding culturally responsive leadership can help principals take action in a manner that closes gaps between White and marginalized minority students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Further evidence has indicated that Hispanic CLD students are among the most academically challenged CLD minority populations in the United States (Orfield & Yun, 1999; Snyder et al., 2016). Latino students have some of the highest dropout rates and were far more likely to be segregated from the majority White population than other minorities (Orfield & Yun, 1999; Snyder et al., 2016). With the passage of ESEA (1965), educational parity for minorities became law. At the time, segregation based on race was much of the focus of ESEA. The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 added to the language of ESEA in a subsequent reauthorization of the groundbreaking law. The BEA recognized that students with limited English speaking abilities needed differentiated services that included teaching in a home

language and promotion of cultural awareness (Wiese & Garcia, 1998). The BEA mandated changes for CLD students. States balked at the changes and were slow to adopt the new approaches. *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) challenged a California school district in the Supreme Court arguing that the District was not providing equal educational opportunities to native Chinese speaking students. Even though *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) upheld the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, the opportunity gaps between CLD Hispanic students and their White peers persist (Scanlan & López, 2014).

It is also imperative to consider the interaction of White teachers with CLD students because, "most culturally diverse students and their teachers live in different worlds, and they do not fully understand or appreciate one another's experiential realities" (Gay, 2010, p. 144). Further still, many teachers view Hispanic students from a deficit perspective and may even discourage them from speaking in their native tongue and openly disparage the immigrant culture (Valenzuela, 2010). A principal has the opportunity to address the negativity and to reframe the view of CLD students away from deficit thinking (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). The job of the leader in a school with Hispanic students is to understand this opportunity and act upon it (Mellom, Portes, Straubhaar, Balderas, & Ariail, 2018). Gallo and Link (2015), stated, "Rather than accepting the status quo of silence around issues of difference like immigration, teacher educators need to foster dialogue and exploration to prepare educators for the realities they will face in the classrooms" (p. 377). In this study, the principal is the "teacher educator."

Culturally responsive pedagogy.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) refers to the practice of teaching minoritized student populations by integrating their cultural schema into classroom instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Scanlan & López, 2014). To follow CRP, teachers need to be willing and competent to

embrace different perspectives. Without a culturally responsive school leader, there is a reduced probability that the entire school will sustain a culture of pedagogy that is relevant to minority students (Khalifa, 2011). With that said, teachers are the critical element in delivering CRP via inclusive cultural competence, critical self-reflection, expecting academic success, and developing and maintaining relationships with culturally diverse students (Gerhart, Harris, & Mixon, 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Scanlan & López, 2014; Schwarz, 2013).

Cultural competence is a facet of culturally relevant pedagogy (Khalifa et al., 2016; Milner, 2010; Scanlan & López, 2014). The term *cultural competence* involves many components, but is primarily focused on integrating and welcoming nonmainstream cultures of minority students into the schoolhouse (Khalifa, 2011). This integration can be facilitated by teachers on culturally relevant pedagogy leadership teams. These teams work to build interests, native language, and student background knowledge into the instructional day. Further, families are viewed as critical supports of minority students through an additive perspective. In this additive view, families are important to support and supplement school culture with proud sharing of the home culture. Conversely, a harmful subtractive schooling view that seeks to exclude culturally diverse students (Valenzuela, 2010) is to be avoided.

While curriculum refers to content that is to be taught, the teacher—and more specifically, the teacher's background values and beliefs—play an important role in what and how the teacher approaches class content. With a predominantly White teacher population (Milner, 2010), it is important to be cognizant via critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection should allow a teacher to explore individual self-bias and color blindness (Delpit, 2006; Milner, 2010).

Equity audits allow for teachers to determine how to address any inequitable constructs within the classroom or pervasive content within a culturally diverse school setting (Skrla et al., 2004).

Expectations within a culturally responsive pedagogy play a critical role between the teachers and their minority students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Milner, 2010). Dweck (2010) has written extensively on the "growth versus fixed" mindset. In a *growth mindset*, it is assumed that a teacher or student can expect that learning is not a finite capacity but, rather, that growth of ability is based on persistence, high expectations, and effort (Dweck, 2010). The research indicates that in many culturally diverse school settings, educators are prone to a deficit model of thinking regarding their students (Scanlan & López, 2014). Simply put, because students speak another language, come from poverty, or have another cultural perspective, the teacher envisions the hurdles to learning as unsurmountable; this deficit thinking leads to lower expectations for student success. A culturally responsive teacher can combat the deficit mindset with a "warm demander" approach (Delpit, 2012). As a warm demander, the teacher stresses expectations for student work and the students' capacity to learn in a loving, caring, structured environment (Delpit, 2012; Noddings, 2015).

Caring in school leadership.

In many respects, the term *caring* in school leadership seems to be a rather simple and benign term as it relates to school. When looking deeper, caring leadership within a school could be linked to CRSL, SJL, and most certainly, Noddings' Caring Theory. There is a reasonable amount of existing research on both compassion and caring approaches to leadership. For the sake of this study, both terms will be equated with one another. As one digs through Noddings' literature of Caring Theory, the most likely application is approached from a student to teacher. Boyatzis, Smith, and Blaize (2006), Louis, Murphy, and Smylie (2016), and Noddings (2015)

also extend that level of care to relationships between leaders and employees and between educational leaders and teachers. For the sake of this study, the application of Caring Theory will be assumed to be between principal, faculty, and staff.

Boyatzis, Smith, and Blaize (2006) stated that a compassionate leader must do three things: show empathy, care, and take action in response to others' feelings. First, and in line with CRSL, a leader must be authentically responsive to the "cared for." Second, and in line with SJL, a leader must advance the success of the one cared for. Finally, in line with Caring Theory, a leader's effort in care must be recognized by those who are receiving care. (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006).

Louis, Murphy, and Smylie (2016) point to caring leadership as a topic worthy of further study because caring leaders can positively impact student achievement in low SES schools. They state, "caring is important in schools and contributes both to the development of more effective adult cultures and to student learning" (Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016, p. 333). Principals' relationships are built around dyadic, authentic, caring interactions with teachers; these, in turn, form the base of care that creates a positive climate (Louis et al., 2016). In a school led by a caring principal, teachers have higher self-efficacy and less burnout (Louis et al., 2016). In investigating the caring leadership, Louis et al. (2016) stated, "In schools, where much of the work of leadership is invisible to others, achieving the deep mutuality suggested by the philosophical literature may be difficult" (p. 320). This statement lends credence to my study as I seek to make the invisible clear via my experiences and reflections through a caring lens as I attempt to lead, as a CRSJL, in a school with a large Hispanic population.

Noddings' Caring Theory is presented in a general sense. As leaders, principals are important to the operation of a school. The elements of Caring Theory can be instituted at a

classroom level based on teacher direction; this study, however, is concerned with me as the principal. This study seeks to add to meager extant literature regarding the investigation of CRSJL through the theoretical lens of Caring Theory. Specifically, Noddings' description of the ethic of care practices will be overlaid upon my actions as I attempt to be a CRSJL using Noddings' four components of dialogue, practice, confirmation, and modeling (Noddings, 2015). Noddings (2006) stated: "Caring leaders should be teachers" (p. 344). This study places me as the principal, attempting to lead in a culturally responsive and socially just way. Just as the teacher is a caregiver for the student, Noddings (2006) states that a principal should replicate that relationship with the teachers.

To foster caring within schools, Noddings (2006) suggests that principals should dialogue with teachers in an open-ended and vulnerable manner. They should also model care through positioning themselves in a way that invites conversation with teachers about operations of the school. Noddings also notes that a leader should encourage teachers to explore teaching in a way that reinforces their efficacy. This study will look at the conversations in the school occurring between a principal and teacher. Noddings implored that leaders are critical in leading when she stated, "Caring leaders must show the way" (p. 344). As a leader, "showing the way" is demonstrated by applying the four components of the ethic of care (2015).

Resilience.

Resilience, in this study, is associated with the ability to endure and overcome adversity. For a high-poverty, highly CLD Hispanic student population, the experience of fitting into a White world can be a challenge (Cavanagh et al., 2014; Scanlan & López, 2014). Ungar (2004) found that "contextual specificity" is required in resilience studies. Contextual specificity allows for the background of setting, characterization and time to provide additional insight to particular

phenomenon. In studying CRSJL, resilience has an additional place based on the nature of the change process in a predominantly White-staffed school. Openly discussing controversial topics requires resilience if the discussion is intended to effect change (Boyatzis & Williams, 2008). The research on resilience also suggests that it can be fostered through relationships, and it is not some naturally occurring trait that is only for lucky few are gifted (Hartling, 2008).

Whiteness and white male privilege.

Whiteness and White male privilege are elements that are studied in relation to educational practice (Collins, 2018; Howard, 2016; McIntosh, 1990; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). The study of Whiteness and White male privilege is vital because the teaching population in the United States is mostly White and many educational leaders are male (Howard, 2016). In educational realms, *Whiteness* is defined as the unspoken and invisible methods and beliefs that are inherently biased in favor of Whites. (Lund & Carr, 2015; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). In short, the concept around Whiteness is one of recognizing what is unspoken and ignored by many Whites when it comes to race: the impact of Whiteness on norms, policies, and practices (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). McIntosh (1990) coined the term *White privilege,* which she defined as the taken-for-granted privileges that come from being White. In describing these privileges, McIntosh points out some unearned privileges that each White person has in an invisible knapsack. These 26 items range from being able to shop alone without being followed to ignoring the language and customs of persons of color without any repercussions. The literature surrounding Whiteness and White Privilege is pertinent to the study of CRSJL because the tenets support identifying race, culture, and injustice and doing something to help the marginalized.

Many studies claim that racial concerns are no longer valid in our current, purportedly postracial society. Many Whites assert that race and gender are no longer an issue affecting the ability of minorities to ascend to the upper reaches of society (Carr, 2016). There are, of course, minority men and women who have attained high-level positions within government and business. Based on the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, some Whites would claim that President Obama's election is the ultimate piece of evidence that race is no longer a concern in this country (Rector-Aranda, 2016). With the recent rise of openly contentious racial issues (e.g., the White nationalist march in Charlottesville), there is evidence that race is still a hurdle that non-Whites must overcome. Research has also noted the deleterious effects of deportation policies since the establishment of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement division (Gallo & Link, 2015). After the election of President Trump, there has also been a noted increase in school-based racism claims (Martel, 2016; Vara-Orta, 2018; Weber, 2017). Prior racist undertones have become more explicit and are hurled at Hispanics, Jews, Blacks, and other non-White students. Many teachers and leaders refrain from discussing race and social issues based on fear and a desire to avoid an uncomfortable conversation (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Howard (2016) stated, "[T]here will be no meaningful movement toward social justice and real educational reform until there has been a significant transformation in the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of White Americans" (p. 9). With this as a backdrop, the literature surrounding Whiteness and White male privilege is essential to this study.

Critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education is based largely on the premise that racism is interwoven into the fabric of the United States' institutional structure and that this pervasive structure must, therefore, be challenged. (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001;

Theoharis & Haddix, 2011; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Yosso, 2005). CRT is relevant to this study based on my attempt to be a CRSJL; the relevance is located at the intersection of me (i.e., a White male principal) attempting to be culturally responsive and socially just on behalf of my vastly high-poverty CLD Hispanic students and my leadership of a majority White faculty and staff. Further, CRT examines and calls out the complex relationship between power and race. This examination allows school leaders and teachers to approach the privileged White-Euro-centric curriculum and pedagogies that inherently undermine equitable structures for minority students. CRT calls for explicit consideration of cultural and structural arrangements in a school setting that facilitates the elimination of discriminatory and deficit thinking (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Social Justice, CRT, and Caring Theory coalesce around the notion that it takes a caring individual doing what is right and just to do something about injustice and racist, hegemonic structures (Koonce, 2018; Rector-Aranda, 2016). School leaders should counter notions of postracial societal claims of colorblindness and race neutrality and unveil contexts involved in White-based school structures. Additionally, leaders should challenge deficit thinking when it comes to their non-White students(Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valenzuela, 2010). Utilizing CRT in education would allow leaders and schools to: (a) challenge meritocracy and practices like tracking, (b) expose underlying power structures that privilege Whites, (c) promote social justice for minority students, (d) acknowledge student backgrounds (i.e., funds of knowledge) (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), and (e) invite other cultures into the curriculum in both historical and contemporary senses (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Theoharis and Haddix (2011) stated, “CRT serves as a vehicle for us to interpret why and how White school leaders do equity-minded and socially just work and to see what is at stake as these school leaders negotiate

crossracial and cross-cultural boundaries" (p. 1336). The challenge to embrace CRT in schools is supported by the larger purpose of creating social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005). As noted, principals are critical to improving the achievement in schools for the marginalized by approaching CRT in culturally responsive, socially just ways.

Investigating CRT is often equated with a political act (Yosso, 2005). The current political climate in the United States is fraught with rhetoric, name-calling, and general unrest. In this sense, addressing race in a school can be problematic because of the potential for political blowback. DeMatthews (2018) stated, however, that: "When principals and teachers fail to think critically about poverty and race, they likely participate in maintaining the injustices present in schools and society" (p. 85). To remain apolitical is not an option for educational leaders when addressing race. As a White male principal, the literature surrounding CRT supports my study.

Mindfulness, compassion, and empathy.

The work of culturally responsive and social justice leaders is fraught with challenges and can be physically and mentally exhausting (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Boyatzis et al., 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Louis et al., 2016). There is a great deal of neurobiology research that has shown that the effects of stress can lead to poor performance, burnout and feelings of loneliness in leaders (V. Brown, Olson, & Brady, 2015). The conception of this study assumes that there will be days that are physically and emotionally exhausting. The idea of working to lead a school as a White male CRSJL runs counter to what may be "easy," considering that the status quo of leaving well enough alone might be the path of least resistance. The intertwined practices of mindfulness, compassion, and empathy are tools that leaders can utilize to counteract the effects of stress.

Mindfulness is a potential antidote for the stressful work of CRSJL. Mindfulness takes a whole body and mind approach to help leaders combat the wear and tear associated with the stresses of leading a school (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; V. Brown et al., 2015). More specifically, mindful leaders harness the brain's capacity to regulate physical reactions to stress via breathing techniques, conscious reflection, and meditation. By utilizing mindfulness, a leader can increase connection, trust, and self-renewal. A mindful leader is more self-aware and able to manage the emotional intelligence needed in relationships (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Connecting to others is an important component within a school, and a regulated mindful leader is better capable of making this connection. Trust, as noted prior, is a crucial element for a school; a mindful leader can approach issues with a more measured response. Self-renewal is vital to combat what has been termed the "power stress syndrome" (i.e., the chronic stress of trying to influence others to act in a manner that the leader deems valuable; (Boyatzis et al., 2006). For the sake of this research, an understanding and application of mindful practices is necessary.

The act of showing compassion is another practice that helps a leader deal with stress (Boyatzis et al., 2006; B. Brown, 2018). In practice, compassion is a combination of taking the perspective of others, showing care, and acting in response to the other person's feelings (Boyatzis et al., 2006). The overlap of compassion with care is noticeable, and the ties are strong. For this study, care is associated more with a pedagogical approach, and compassion is associated as a general pedestrian term.

Empathy is a nonjudgmental perspective-taking practice (B. Brown, 2006, 2018). Empathetic leaders are more capable of handling stress and modeling care as they attend to others' feelings (Boske et al., 2017). In tending to others, empathic leaders slow the process of reaction and open themselves to compassion, understanding, and interconnectedness (Boske et

al., 2017). As a leader practices empathy, the leader becomes connected to the group. For this study, perspective is important: from the principal to the teachers and from the teacher to the students. As a principal investigating CRSJL through the lens of Caring Theory, I note that modeling is an important element of Noddings' ethic of care. As the principal, I will be able to connect to my teachers through modeling empathy.

Autoethnography and CRSJL.

While there are studies regarding caring leadership, culturally responsive school leadership, and social justice leadership, they are not combined, and there is a shortage of practical applications of theory to practice. This point is made more explicit by Marshall et al. (1996):

> When scholars and policymakers construct theories and practices that emanate from the daily interactions and alterations of educators trying to meet children's needs and create caring communities in their schools, then school structures and the work of educational leaders will make more sense. (p. 21)

The autoethnographic research in this study seeks to make sense of my lived experience as I share and reflect on my experiences of trying to be a CRSJL. Autoethnography provides an open window that allows an intimate and vulnerable exploration that will transform the theoretical into practical. The combination of autoethnography, CRSL, SJL, and Caring Theory intersect at the call to do something to make things better for students. Noddings (2015) provides a strong statement linking Caring Theory to CRSJL and autoethnography, stating: "Simply learning about theoretical positions and working through hypothetical dilemmas may be insufficient for moral action in the real world" (p. 149). Further, Theoharis and Haddix (2011) stated, "Not all White leaders are the same" (p. 1347) and that investigating the "nuanced

interpretations" and social justice approach of principals is needed. Through autoethnography, a nuanced approach to CRSJL will be shared, allowing for the interpretation of experiences by those who read the research.

Various methods have been used to investigate leaders' social justice leadership practices (Delpit, 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Skrla et al., 2004). Accordingly, cultural biographies, equity audits, and self-reflection are important tools for leaders to use to understand one's social justice position. DeMatthews (2018) stated, "A principal who is racially, socially, and politically conscious must have the capacity to engage in ongoing critical inquiry and self reflection" (p. 178). Autoethnography moves the reflection from a place that is rooted in delving into personal awareness to a shared experience that not only includes the researcher but also includes the reader in meaning-making. DeMatthews (2018) stated, "To chart a new direction, principals need to lead courageously despite the weight of the status quo" (p. 85). This autoethnographic study explores my culturally responsive and socially just practices as a White male principal in a predominantly high poverty, CLD Hispanic school.

Conclusion.

To address the research questions regarding an autoethnographic investigation of CRSJL, a review of literature is necessary to position the study within the existing body of research. This review of the extant literature has covered: (a) the role of the principal, (b) social justice leadership, (c) culturally responsive school leadership, (d) the history of multicultural education, (e) academic considerations of marginalized culturally linguistically diverse Hispanic students, and (f) culturally responsive pedagogy. The research indicates that in most academic measures, minority students lag behind their White peers. Also, the population trend indicates that by 2035 the population of the United States will shift to greater student diversity. To mitigate these

disparities, the principal can approach the issue of inequities by leading in a manner that is culturally responsive and socially just. With a teacher workforce that is mostly White, the principal would need to pursue a culturally relevant pedagogy.

As a White male principal of a CLD school, conducting an autoethnography of my perceptions of leading in a culturally responsive socially just manner was supported based on the research. This study filled a void. Specifically, there is little in the way of "how to" when it comes to leading a school as a CRSJL. The focus of this autoethnography centered on Hispanic populations because my school is comprised of a vast number of Latino/a students with a predominantly White female teacher population. The study of Whiteness and White male privilege was vital because I, as both the researcher and the researched, am a White male, and because the teaching population in the United States is mostly White (Howard, 2016). As a leader who is a White male, the gift of my Whiteness is also something that must be confronted. A leader who pushes back against White-centric traditional teaching methods may be seen in a negative light (Collins, 2018).

My background as an abused and marginalized student provided a contextual knowledge that is similar in some respects to the students in the building that I lead. In this study, the specificity of my context provided insight into my experience for other educational leaders. Also, the context of the researcher's own experience placed the study in a mind space where the researcher can empathize with the lived experiences of the diverse student population and subsequently do something about injustices. This empathy may not be understood by someone who grew up in a stable, White, middle-class home. Brown (2018) stated, "When we own our hard stories and rumble with them, we can write a new ending—an ending that includes how we're going to use what we've survived to be more compassionate and empathic" (p. 113). The

intent of this open and vulnerable exploration of CRSJL provided me an opportunity to potentially write a new ending. In answering the research questions, I along with the readers were able to determine whether I, as a culturally responsive social justice leader, moved from an agnostic to zealot. I was and I am hopeful.

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2 ONE WHITE MALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S JOURNEY TO CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

It was a contradiction of self that led to my dissatisfaction with my first role as principal. I denied, implicitly, my background of shared experiences with marginalized students. By not sharing those facets of my life, I was complicit in leading a school that maintained the raditionally White-centric experience between students and teachers. By remaining silent, I was not culturally responsive or acting in a socially just manner towards my teachers and students. With my second foray back into the principalship, I intend to lead in a manner that contrasts with my earlier, self-professed failures. As a White male, in a position of authority, I have an opportunity to share my experiences as I approach Culturally Responsive Social Justice Leadership (CRSJL). CRSJL is a term that comes from merging Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) and Social Justice Leadership (SJL) theories. This autoethnographic study is situated around me, as the researcher and the researched, and my experiences leading a school in a CRSJL manner.

School leaders face many challenges as they attempt to manage the issues that are thrown at them each day (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Garza, 2009; Khalifa, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). There is a dramatic achievement gap in the United States between White and non-White students (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Additionally, the principal can directly impact culture, climate, and achievement in schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Since World War II, the social fabric of the United States has changed. Changing family

structures, divorce, working mothers, teenage pregnancy, poverty, immigration, music and clothing have impacted society in many ways (Noddings, 2015). Additionally, many educational leaders have taken a business and efficiency approach to both management and pedagogy (DeMatthews, 2018). The combination of these elements has alienated students, frustrated teachers and led many principals to question how to lead a school that best serves all students (Noddings, 2015).

The purpose of this autoethnography is to investigate my perceptions and experiences of CRSJL in a school (i.e., Joyner Elementary, a pseudonym), which is comprised of a majority of lower socioeconomic status (SES) Hispanic students. This study is borne out of the necessity to consider the needs of a growing Hispanic population—specifically, in a Northeast Georgia rural county school where the researcher serves as principal. Based on the literature regarding CRSL, SJL, Caring Theory, and the growing Hispanic population, exploring my perceptions can help others reflect on practices and address how mainstream White educational leaders can approach cultural diversity.

I reflected on my prior experiences as an abused youth to identify with marginalized students as I led a school in a culturally responsive and socially just way. As a White male principal leading a mostly White female teacher workforce, I reflected on my practices as a White male privileged leader with my staff. My hope is that the reader will reflect on this autoethnographic research on CRSJL and move to a more inclusive and equity based educational approach for marginalized students. With this hope, the accompanying social change that can result from a changed leadership approach will allow marginalized students to move from a disadvantaged position to one of inclusion, acceptance, and success. I no longer wish to remain in the shadows—to hide behind my White male privilege and to offer silent assent to injustice.

Rather, I wish to stand as a CRSJL zealot in the arena, willing to fight for those whom I love; my students.

Guiding questions.

To conduct this autoethnographic study, I propose the following questions:

1. How are my practices as a culturally responsive social justice leader manifested in the school?
2. What challenges do I face as I attempt to cultivate a culturally responsive social justice school climate in a culturally and linguistically diverse Hispanic environment?

Significance of the study.

Minority student populations are growing in the United States (Scanlan & López, 2014). With this as a backdrop, it is critical that teachers are led in a manner that fosters a culturally responsive and socially just school climate (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; DeMatthews, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). This study will contribute to the extant research concerning culturally responsive and socially just leadership. While there is a body of research that expounds on the "what" culturally responsive and social justice school leadership entails, there is a lack of study on the "how to" approach leading teachers with explicit examples (Khalifa et al., 2016). Further still, studies from DeMatthews, Mawhinney, Capper, Theoharis, Sebastian, Brown, Khalifa, Gooden, Davis, Madhlangobe, Berkovich and Bogotch look at CRSL and SJL separately.

This study seeks to combine CRSL and SJL into CRSJL as an inclusive approach to leading a school. This study is significant because it addresses the gap in the literature, via an autoethnography, and invites the reader to reflect on the specific methods of how I—a White male principal—approached leading a mostly marginalized student population while working with a predominantly White faculty and staff. Using my particular, nuanced, complex, and

insider knowledge of leading as a CRSJL, I intend my study to extend the existing research and contributes to knowledge about culturally responsive and socially just school leadership.

Positionality.

My positionality in this study cannot be ignored. As a White, upper middle-class, male principal, I hold a position of power and authority. While I can make a claim to know what it is like to live the marginalized life, and can even share that fact with my stakeholders, the fact remains that I am presently perceived as: "the boss," "the man in charge," and a White man. As a White male principal, I hold tremendous symbolic and formal power. I must be cognizant that my positionality is significant to those who have been traditionally oppressed and marginalized. Further, I must also recognize that, based on social structures, I have privilege due to my male Whiteness; indeed, I may have been able to escape the effects of my marginalized life based on my genetic makeup. In reflecting on White male privilege, McIntosh (2012) stated the following in relation to authors acknowledging their own privilege,

> I think we need to be more self-reflective about our own histories, positionalities, experiences, and questions, as bodies in the body of the social world, and write as though we were thinkers with personal and institutional locations of our own. (p. 204)

With self-acknowledgement of my Whiteness and White privilege, it is also critical for me to recognize that I have reaped the rewards of my color and gender; yet, despite this acknowledgement, I wish to work, without shame, against the educational structures that maintain marginalization, racism, and hegemony (Carr, 2016; McIntosh, 2012). My effort, through this autoethnography is to position myself as a White male, with overt acknowledgement of my privilege, in a manner that seeks to understand and reflexively share my quest to lead in a manner that upsets the same construct that most certainly helped me get to where I am today.

Through this sharing, my hope is that my experience will allow for practical applications by other leaders as they attempt to lead in a culturally responsive, socially just manner.

Theoretical framework.

Settling on a theoretical framework for this study was a challenge based on the wide and varied selection of frameworks available. As Crotty (2015) stated, "There is much talk of their philosophical underpinnings, but how the methodologies and methods relate to more theoretical elements is often left unclear" (p. 1). Theoretical frameworks are often described in construction terms: blueprints, framing, foundation, edifice, and scaffolding (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Crotty, 2015; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Basing research on a theoretical framework is critical to formulating a guiding blueprint that allows cohesion of research to an established, tested, and accepted thought (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). A theoretical framework forms the foundation that ties the researcher's methodology and approach to a study for the purpose of engaging the topic. To emphasize, Grant and Osanloo (2014) stated, "The researcher must keep the theoretical framework front and center in justifying the research questions, the problem, the significance of the study, and as a way to help determine the research design and the analysis plan" (p. 24). Without a solid research-based and supported theoretical foundation, a dissertation may suffer from a lack of structure or true purpose.

To conduct this autoethnography with a solid foundation and vision for the study, I relied on Crotty's (2015) description of the research process. Crotty (2015) points to four elements that could guide the research process: (a) epistemology (i.e., how you know what you know), (b) theoretical perspective (i.e., philosophical stance and assumptions behind the chosen research methodology), (c) methodology (i.e., strategy used to gain knowledge), and (d) methods (i.e.,

procedures used to gather and analyze data). The elements are interrelated and inform one another; they are laid out by Crotty (2015) as followed in Figure 1 (p. 4):

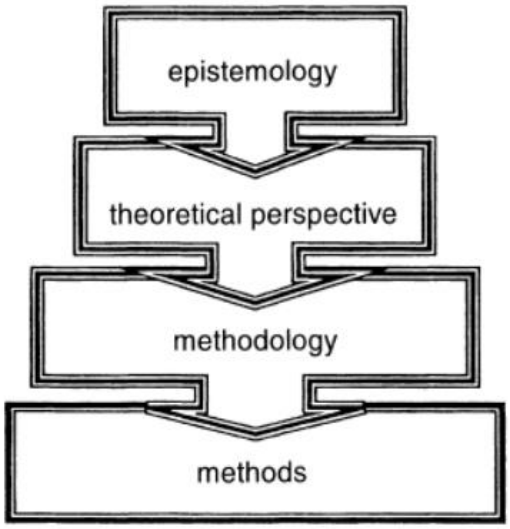

Figure 1. Elements Guiding the Research Process (Crotty, 2015).

In my effort to make sense of both my lived experience as an abused student and my experiences as a principal ate mpting to be culturally responsive and socially just, I settled on constructionism as the epistemology to guide my study. *Constructionism* is defined by Crotty (2015) as follows: "All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). As I engaged in the efforts in my school—a social setting—and reflected on my lived experience, and as I attempted to practice CRSJL, I constructed meaning based on my interactions with myself and others. I built meaning as I interacted with my students, teachers, community, district office and my own thoughts. By utilizing Crotty's (2015) research process example, Figure 2 documents my epistemological research process.

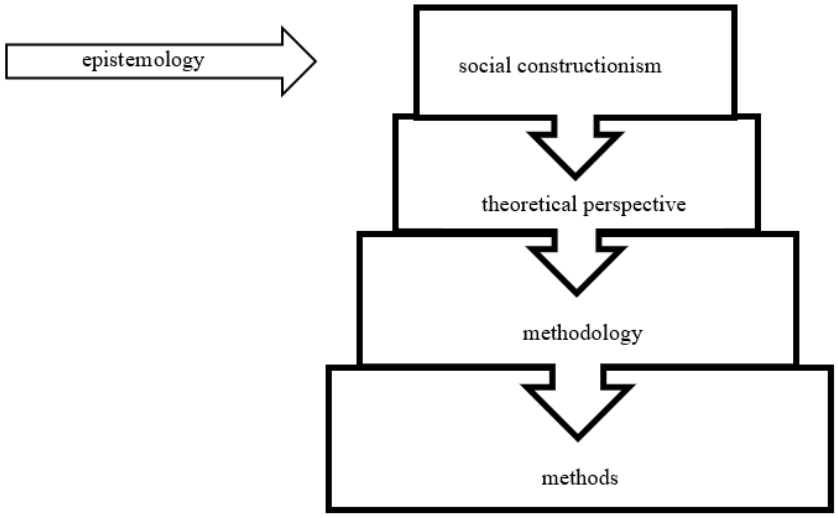

Figure 2. My Epistemological Research Process. Adapted from Crotty (2015).

Caring theory.

The theoretical perspective for my study is Noddings' (2015) Caring Theory. In line with Crotty's research process, theoretical perspective is a figurative lens of assumptions and a philosophical stance that is utilized by the researcher to view the study in much the same way a lens helps the "seer" see with glasses (Crotty, 2015). A wearer of glasses has a physical challenge (i.e., difficulty seeing clearly); by viewing through corrective lenses, the wearer is able to see more clearly. In this same respect, my autoethnography was guided, viewed, and perceived through the context of Caring Theory. As I attempted to lead as a CRSJL, I looked at those experiences and perceptions through Noddings' Caring Theory. In utilizing Crotty's research process example (2015), Figure 3 documents my theoretical perspective in my research process.

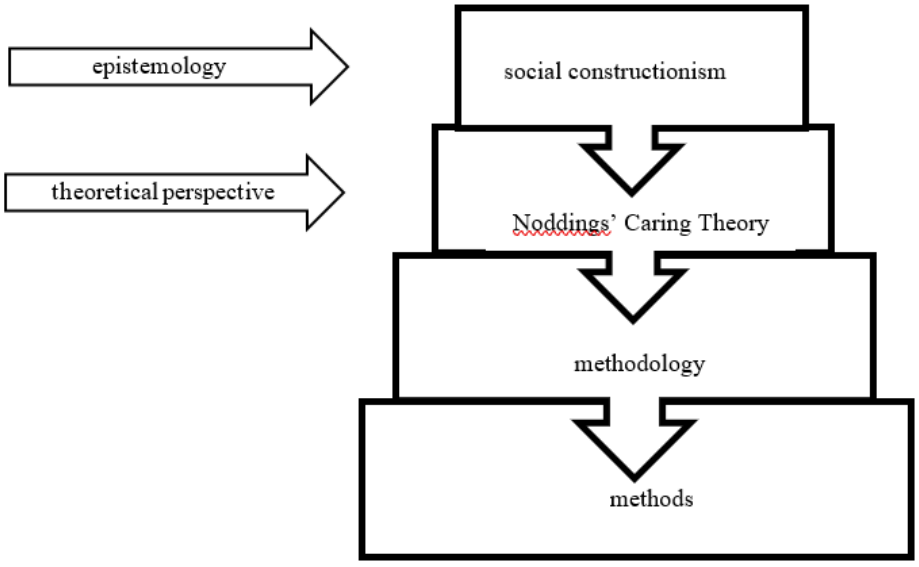

Figure 3. My Research Process Based on Noddings' Caring Theory. Adapted from Crotty (2015).

Noddings' (2015) Caring Theory has roots in both feminism, and progressivism, and is built around a caring relationship between the carer and the cared for. Noddings (2015) stated, "Students should be given opportunities to learn how to care for themselves, for other human beings, for the natural and human-made worlds, and for the world of ideas. This learning to care requires significant knowledge; it defines genuine education" (p. xiii). In line with my assumptions and theoretical perspective, the argument could be made that "one size does not fit all," whether referring to a traditional or progressive approach to educational structures (Noddings, 2006). Noddings (2006) proposed that students "rarely express a need to learn the things we require of them" (p. 341). For this reason, a teacher is meant to inquire, respond, and adjust instruction accordingly. Yet still, Noddings (2015) stated that "the living other is more important that any theory" (p. xix). In other words, relational ethics are a priority and are built

around an ethic of care and centers of care. A focus on the ethic of care and centers of care, within the construct of Caring Theory, served as the theoretical perspective for this study.

Ethic of care.

To apply the Caring Theory theoretical perspective to my study, it was important to understand the ethic of care. Noddings (2015) points to action and individual contexts as part of a moral education. In order to approach this moral education, Noddings describes an ethic of care that challenges the traditional ethics and morals education, and says that moral reasoning is not as important as building attitudes and the skills of caring (Noddings, 2015). In order to build an ethic of care the following four components need to take place: (a) modeling, (b) dialogue, (c) practice, and (d) confirmation.

First, in modeling, teachers show how to care; if we want to grow student capacity, it must first be experienced. Next, describing dialogue, Noddings points to Freire (1970) and offers that dialogue is open-ended and searchers for understanding, empathy, or appreciation. The third component of a moral education, practice, provides opportunity for the cared-for to develop caregiving skills. Noddings (2015) cautions that practice in caring should not be some preset requirement that "checks off a box." If done right, practice can serve as a transformational element for schools. The last component of confirmation "requires attribution of the best possible motive consonant with reality" (Noddings, 2015, p. 25). Confirmation is not a set of pre-determined strategies, formulas, or acts; rather, the idea of confirmation is centered around becoming or seeing someone else as a better version of one's self (Noddings, 2015).

Centers of care.

In addition to the ethic of care, it was also important to understand centers of care within Caring Theory. As the study was conducted, centers of care were utilized as a lens of the

theoretical perspective. Centers of care range from relational to curricular and address the different capacities that students need to develop (Noddings, 2015). Noddings' (2015) seven centers of care are:

- Caring and continuity,
- Caring for self,
- Caring in the inner circle,
- Caring for strangers and distant others,
- Caring for animals, plants, and the Earth,
- Caring for the human-made world, and
- Caring for ideas.

I applied four of the seven centers of care, as I conducted this study: caring and continuity, caring for the inner circle, caring for strangers and distant other, and caring for ideas (Noddings, 2015).

To describe caring and continuity, Noddings (2015) points to the changing fabric of society in the United States as unstable in terms of family, immigration, and poverty. Continuity within Caring Theory is associated with stability and consistency. In order to address students with caring and continuity, "Schools should be committed to a great moral purpose" (Noddings, 2015, p. 64). Additionally, within caring and continuity, school residence, teachers, and curriculum are also focuses.

Caring for the inner circle is concerned with mates and lovers, friends, colleagues and neighbors, children, and students (Noddings, 2015). When dealing with caring relations amongst the inner circle, there are times when the carer might be in an unequal exchange of care with the cared for, especially between adults and children or students. In evaluating caring for the inner

circle, Noddings (2015) stated that we should look for the signs that we would typically see in a "healthy family" (p. 109).

Caring for strangers and distant others addresses the difficulty of, and remedies for, the hurdle of proximal distance in practicing care. Noddings (2015) makes it clear that distance promotes moral disengagement and that it is important to gain multicultural knowledge of others. Further still, it is critical that dialogues about race, ethnicity, religion, and gender take place to help schools gain knowledge of distant others.

Caring for ideas (Noddings, 2015) centers Caring Theory on pedagogy, constructivism, supporting a democratic nation, and creating a place in schools where students learn based on their interests. Noddings (2015) stated, "Beyond providing the best possible education for individual students, a pedagogy that posits different objectives for students with different capacities and interest stands the best chance of meeting our needs as a nation" (p. 151).

Noddings asserts that a liberal education, as it has been constructed, is flawed and is slanted towards the privileged (Noddings, 2015). Simply put, the argument is that curriculum and its tacit privilege are not of a caring nature. Noddings (2015) stated, "The greatest burden of the schools, as a result, is trying to find some way to teach adequately intelligent students things that they do not want to learn" (p. 42). These centers of care are critical to human life and as a result, students should be afforded the opportunity to learn through centers of care.

Caring theory and the principal.

While most of Noddings' Caring Theory is centered on the teacher-and-student relationship, Noddings stakes the claim that in order to have a caring school, a principal must also embrace a caring and relational approach (Noddings, 2006, 2015). This notion was critical to this study. The supposition was that as the teacher is to the student, so the principal is to the

teachers (Noddings, 2006). With that as a premise, if a teacher is meant to care for students, then the principal should care for teachers. In the description of "principal" as carer, the leader is meant to be a good listener, should inquire about teaching, and should engage in discussions with teachers to support their needs and desires and, by extension, support teachers as they help children grow and learn. Noddings (2006) stated that principals:

> Can make it both comfortable and rewarding for teachers to seek help instead of trying to hide their weaknesses, doubts and failures. They can serve as models of critical thinking by showing that they continually question even the methods and procedures that they themselves have officially advocated. (p. 344)

In thinking about how this study is tied to a theoretical framework, Bochner and Ellis (2016) stated, "A theoretical frame should be thought of as just another story, though usually a less concrete one" (p. 189). When looking at my "story" (i.e., my experiences, or my background), I settled on Noddings' work because I felt that it most aligned with my assumptions about how I could lead a school in a CRSJL manner.

Caring Theory embodies a responsive, compassionate, and altruistic approach to education that is born out of a moral imperative to do something based on the educational needs of our children (Noddings, 2015). The alignment of Caring Theory to this study is derived from the intersection of three premises: (a) my desire to recognize my history, (b) my beliefs that our most vulnerable marginalized students deserve better, and (c) that as a principal, I can lead in a caring manner that addresses culturally responsive and social justice needs. After all, Noddings stated (2015), "...practice in caring should transform schools and, eventually, the society in which we live" (p 25). Based on my alignment with Noddings' Caring Theory, and my study's focus, it made sense to frame my study in this way.

Methodology

In order to investigate the research questions, it was critical to decide on a methodology. Autoethnography is not a standard qualitative research method as is evidenced by the various types of research. Autoethnographic data can be explored through performative, evocative narrative, critical and analytic versions (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). I chose an autoethnographic study as a methodology to conduct this research for many reasons. Autoethnography connects the personal to the cultural via the lived experience of the writer (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). In this study I explored my perceptions of CRSJL as a White male elementary principal. My experience and identification as a marginalized, abused youth, coupled with personal and professional struggles create a viewpoint that was best investigated through an autoethnography (Adams et al., 2015). Further, through an epiphany, I arrived at this methodology because the structure allows me to "make sense of my experience" (Denzin, 2014). This exploration presents a pragmatic and reflexive evocative story that allows the reader to reflect on CRSJL through the lens of Noddings' Caring Theory.

The approach to autoethnography research aligned with a social constructionism worldview approach. *Social constructionism* is an epistemology used in qualitative research, whereby the researcher constructs knowledge with the perspective that there is no single research method to derive truth (Crotty, 2015) My research relied on my CRSJL views through the theoretical perspective of Noddings' Caring Theory. Throughout the process, meaning was developed based on the research, which consisted of multiple data points, experiences, perceptions, and interactions. As Crotty (2015) stated, "Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world" (p. 8). As the researcher, I looked

for the meaning as I engaged and reflected on my experiences; this approach filled a gap of knowledge in regard to CRSJL for me, a principal, in a northeast Georgia rural county school.

Within educational social sciences research, autoethnography has gained increased usage and acceptance (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that offers complex and specific knowledge at the intersection of the writer, culture and experiences (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). Taken further, (*auto*) represents the self, (*ethno*) looks at culture and (*graphy*) is evidenced by writing (Adams et al., 2015). This autoethnographic study is undergirded by the confluence of my role as a White male principal in shaping school climate with a largely White teacher workforce, combined with the growing trend towards higher levels of cultural and linguistic diversity and the, current overwhelming achievement gaps between White and marginalized students. In utilizing Crotty's (2015) research process example, Figure 4 documents the methodology in my research process.

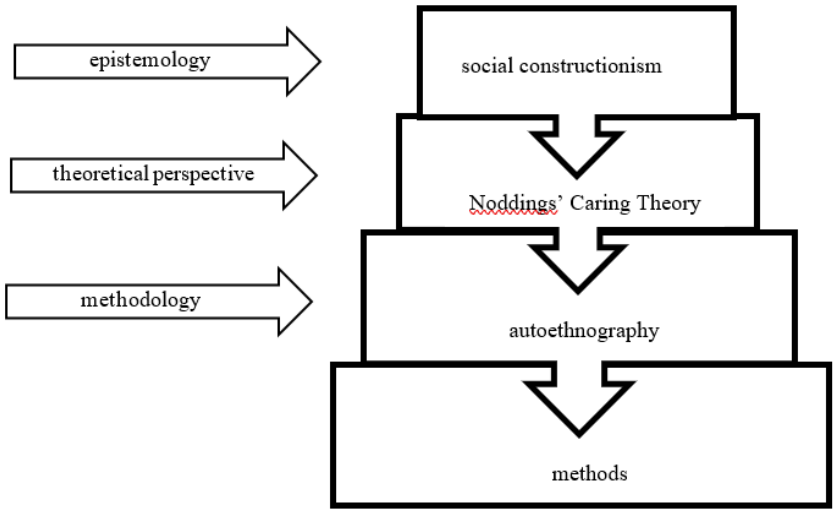

Figure 4. Methodology in my Research Process. Adapted from Crotty (2015).

Support for autoethnography.

Anthropologist Michael Jackson (1989) stated, "the knower cannot be separated from what the knower claims to know, because our understanding of others can only proceed from within our own experience. And this experience includes our personalities and histories as much as our field research" (p. 17). My experiences are varied and bring forth a contextual background knowledge that is embedded within struggle and pain. That background is not one that can claim what it is like to be an African American, an English as a second language immigrant, or a disabled student, but I can identify with many of the circumstances of a poor and abused student living on the margins of society.

This study was situated within the autoethnography methodology that drives the reader to "feel and do something" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 58). My written, lived experiences, both in the past and the present, call on other principals and educators to feel and do something about marginalized students through the lens of CRSJL. The support for using this autoethnography—a questioned research method—was based on several aspects of the methodology: (a) making a contribution to existing research, (b) embracing the vulnerable self as a way to understand emotions and improve social life, (c) disrupting taboos, and (d) reclaiming lost and disregarded voices making research accessible to multiple audiences (Adams et al., 2015). These aspects were examined through personal, cultural and professional aspects.

Autoethnography, although maligned in certain respects, can indeed contribute to the scholarly conversation (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). My hope was that this study would inform educational leadership practice towards social change. For me, the exploration of my own perceptions as a CRSJL extended the existing research in three ways. First, I looked at the existing uninvestigated confluence of the CRSL and SJL literature and proposed a new look

at the topic using a combined approach, termed CRSJL. Next, as a White male principal with experiential knowledge as a marginalized student, my autoethnographic study of CRSJL provided a unique perspective that does not currently exist within the research. Finally, my study provided additional discourse around the subject of the principalship, focused by a dialogic, reflexivity on the particular practices that one can take or avoid in an effort to create a culturally responsive and socially just school environment.

Ellis (2004), one of the early adopters of autoethnography, used writing as a vehicle to explore intimacy and vulnerability. This has been termed *writing as method* (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Through vulnerability, the researcher uses narratives to document personal experience, thus contributing to research and theory; similar to qualitative research, the researcher also poses research questions (Adams et al., 2015). Autoethnography embraces vulnerability through the asking and answering of research questions and allows the reader to connect emotionally to the topic. Through vulnerability, the reader is able to think with the story (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), and to create a reflective space for the reader to place himself in the moment or in a future (Adams et al., 2015). Through this space, the reader and researcher make a connection, facilitated by the researcher's exposure of self as honest and vulnerable.

Autoethnographic research lends itself to a disruption of traditional hegemony found within culture (Adams et al., 2015). Social change is the desired result of many autoethnographies, including this research, and many researchers use the method to move audiences to question matters of identity, diversity, racism, sexism, injustice and human suffering (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In my early career as an assistant principal and principal, I led as a traditional White male leader in a White female-dominated elementary school teaching environment. I accepted the status quo, and—like many other principals—was concerned with

managing the many tasks that are associated with the job. It was through my struggle and epiphany that I came to appreciate that when I was in the principalship, I had the greatest chance to directly impact the school climate and culture. It was also in this role when I felt that I was not the principal whom I could have been for those who needed me most.

Typical academic dialect has hindered many readers from obtaining understanding (Adams et al., 2015; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Many readers skim articles because of confusing jargon and verbiage, and as a result, the readings of dissertations and texts often go unfinished (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Autoethnography uses narrative language and avoids jargon, thus creating greater accessibility. Autoethnography creates the connection between writing and meaning, and storytelling is an approach used within this methodology. The nature of storytelling removes barriers by addressing both the heart and the head (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Many social science researchers deride the use of autoethnography based on the insertion of the researcher into the research (Adams, 2017; Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Wall, 2016). Based on the intersection of personal experience and the importance of the topic, however, the use of this research methodology has merit:

> If our tasks as researchers, as social scientists, is to study the social lives of humans, then we cannot relegate elements of human lives or experiences to the periphery, nor can we bracket out the ways our lives and experiences are intertwined with our research. (Adams et al., 2015, p. 8)

The thoughts of Adams, Holman, Jones and Ellis on qualitative research clearly delineates the importance of the researcher within the field of social science study. Further still, and more specifically, autoethnography positions the author in the research as both the researcher and the researched (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004; Ngunjiri, Hernandez,

& Heewon, 2010). It is through this method that I engaged in a study that revealed my perceptions of leading in a culturally responsive and socially just manner as a White male principal in a highly diverse elementary school.

While transferability (i.e., generalizability) is not necessarily possible within this study based on the micro-view of the subject matter, the research is valid (Crotty, 2015). As is typical with autoethnography, the desired result is to achieve resonance with the reader (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). *Resonance* occurs when the reader reacts and is compelled to do something regarding understanding of the content and context presented (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Resonance was the desired goal of this research. Autoethnography is associated with a constructionism epistemology and, as Crotty stated, "What constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is no true or valid interpretation" (p. 47). Through this application of logic, this study sought to rest with me and the reader in a way that was helpful, revealing, and convincing, and not as a conclusion that can be applied to a general community of researchers.

The combination of autoethnography with a CRSJL approach seemed to be a good match based on the desire for social change. My emergent understanding for a CRSJL approach, coupled with a research method that embraces the sharing of oneself in triumph and tragedy and that provides insight on the collision of the cultural with personal, situated this study most appropriately. As Behar (1996) stated, "Often, the work of autoethnographers expresses a personal and cultural urgency with a critical edge" (p 177). Based on my epiphanic past experiences, I was a White male principal attempting to lead a high poverty, diverse student population as a CRSJL.

Autoethnographer background.

I am a second-time, White male principal, with a majority White faculty and staff, serving a poor, largely Hispanic student demographic at Joyner Elementary School. In my first experience as principal of Smoke Rise Elementary School, I feel that I did not call upon my marginalized and abused background to change the way that the school attended to our poor, minority, and English language learners. My goal in my second tenure as a principal at Joyner Elementary School was to get beyond the fear of sharing my abused past, and shine the light on the difficult circumstances many of our students face on a daily basis. In sharing my background, I have tried to create a link between myself, a White privileged male, with our students living on the margins of society. In doing so, I have attempted to provide credibility to an effort to change the way Joyner Elementary approaches students by trying to lead in a CRSJL manner.

Research shows that school leadership has a large influence on school culture (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, 2006). Further still, there have been studies that tout distributed school leadership teams as important (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), but research has placed the principalship as the single greatest influence of school climate and culture (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Despite the meritocracy claims that education is a great equalizer for all students who put forth effort, marginalized students; those who are non-White, culturally and linguistically diverse, poor and/or identified as learning disabled, are not performing as well as white students (Delpit, 2006; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Social justice leadership and culturally responsive school leaders have the capacity to mitigate some of the injustices associated with marginalized students and therefore lead to success (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007).

For researchers, epiphanies have a significant role in the researchers' desire to use an autoethnographic approach (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). An

epiphany is described as a life-changing event that troubles the researcher long after the event and creates a reflection that often leads to a compulsion to make courageous change (Adams et al., 2015). My desire to approach this study was prompted by the intersection of personal and professional epiphanies during my fifth year as an assistant superintendent of finance and operations for a mid-sized school district in northeast Georgia.

Prior to assuming my role as assistant superintendent, I served as principal at Smoke Rise Elementary (a pseudonym for the school). My principalship experience at Smoke Rise Elementary ended with a sense of dissatisfaction. While I felt like my tenure would be deemed successful, my desire to lead teachers in a culturally responsive, socially just manner was frustrating at best. In hindsight, I lacked the courage to identify myself as a formerly abused poor student; instead, I chose to stay silent because of shame. I did not advocate for the students who needed my advocacy. When given the opportunity to ascend to assistant superintendent after a year and a half in the role of principal, I took that opportunity.

In the ensuing 5 years, I endured personal and professional struggles. While serving in the central office as part of the executive school district staff, my struggles were significant. Personally, my son was shot in a hunting accident, resulting in the amputation of his lower left leg. That crisis was followed by the deaths of my father, mother, and brother within 3 years. Professionally, I endured the Great Recession as the district's financial and operational leader. I led or co-led initiatives to close schools, reduce teacher workforce, reduce pay, and pursue other cost-cutting measures. Taken individually, any one of my struggles could have been termed as life-changing epiphany, but I endured.

My epiphany came during my fifth year as assistant superintendent and during my first year as a doctoral program at Georgia State University. The moment came in the quiet solitude

of reflection after reading *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, by Greg McKeown (2014). In this life-changing book, McKeown proposed that a simpler life is better, happier and more productive. I was knocked for a loop when I pondered the three basic questions that the author posed. Those questions were (McKeown, 2014): "What am I deeply passionate about? What taps my talent? Finally, what meets a significant need in the world" (p. 111)? As I thought about the questions, I discovered that I could not affirmatively find my passion in the role of finance and operations. Yet, I felt that I could answer each of those questions with confidence in my role as a principal. With this acknowledgement and a high dose of courage, I decided to make a move back to a principalship.

Participants.

As an autoethnographer, I am the primary participant of this study. I brought my experiences to the research (Adams et al., 2015). My background experiences include: poverty, a broken home, homosexual parenting, incestuous sexual abuse, underage drug and alcohol consumption, and physical violence. Based on the intersectionality of these components and my current role as a White male elementary principal in a high poverty, high Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) elementary school, with an overwhelmingly White faculty and staff, a call to action to reduce and remove inherently biased societal, and school structures was addressed through a self-proclaimed CRSJL approach.

The purpose of this autoethnography was to explore my perceptions of CRSJL at Smoke Rise Elementary, a majority White, lower SES school, and Joyner Elementary, a majority lower SES, CLD, Hispanic-populated school in a northern Georgia county school district. This study consisted mainly of my reflections; therefore, no direct participation occurred with other participants. When there were instances within the data that included interactions with teachers

or peers, however, generalized feelings via composite characters were used to protect their identities. Composite characters can represent combinations of multiple people over multiple times and, thus describe generalizable interaction (Adams et al., 2015; Angrosino, 1998; Ellis, 2004). In order to convey the context of this autoethnography, I have provided the demographics of both Smoke Rise and Joyner Elementary and an explanation of the qualifications for free and reduced lunch.

Smoke Rise Elementary School.

Smoke Rise Elementary School is a pseudonym for a school in a mid-sized school district in northeast Georgia. I served as principal at Smoke Rise Elementary for a year and a half. The school had approximately 370 students comprised by approximately 75% White, 20% Hispanic and a small mixture of other races (Georgia Department of Education, 2018a). Of those students, 59% of those students received free or reduced lunches (Georgia Department of Education, 2018b). The entire teacher workforce at Smoke Rise Elementary was made up of White females.

Joyner Elementary School.

Joyner Elementary School is a pseudonym for a school in a mid-sized school district in northeast Georgia. I currently serve as the principal at Joyner Elementary. During the study, the school had approximately 700 students. The school was occupied by approximately 85% White, 10% Hispanic and a small mixture of other races (Georgia Department of Education, 2018a). Of those students, 95% of those students received free or reduced lunches (Georgia Department of Education, 2018b). The teacher workforce at Joyner Elementary was mostly comprised of White females, but also included two White Male teachers and two minority female teachers.

Free and reduced lunch qualification.

For this study, the classification of a *lower SES student* was defined as a student who qualified for free or reduced lunch. I specifically looked at the Georgia qualification information from the 2017-2018 school year. In this example, I presume a family of three: a single mother, first grader and an infant. For the first grader to qualify for free lunch, the mother would have to have earned less than $26,546 annually (Georgia Department of Education, 2017a). For that same first grader to get reduced lunch pricing, that single mother would have made less than $37,777. In this example, the single mother—depending on income, taxes, and other deductions—would take home anywhere between $1,660 to $2,520 per month. Considering the amount of money required to cover rent, food, utilities, clothes, diapers, daycare, and transportation, the qualifying threshold seemed very low.

Data generation.

This autoethnographic study deployed a layered account, or non-sequential, non-linear approach to research (Ronai, 1995). This study took place over 6 months. Data generation continued until I reached the point where I felt that I could be courageous and—although vulnerable— speak, write, and think about CRSJL without fear of being wrong. Based on the constructive and interpretive nature of an autoethnography, and since autoethnographic studies are rooted in ethnography, similar fieldwork methods were employed in this study (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Crotty, 2015; Denzin, 2014). The fieldwork involved various data generation methods: journaling, blogging and social media posts, photos, and narrative writing (Adams et al., 2015; Denzin, 2014). Utilizing Crotty's (2015) research process example, Figure 5 documents the methods in my research process.

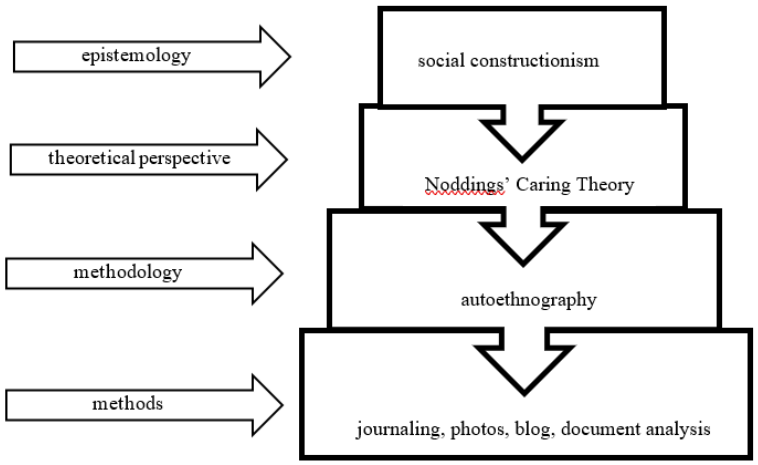

Figure 5. My Autoethnographic Research Methods. Adapted from Crotty (2015).

Journal entries.

Because the purpose of this study was to investigate my perceptions, experiences, and feelings as I attempted to lead a school as CRSJL, I felt it was necessary to document my experiences in a journal. I used this journal consistently throughout the study as a repository for my memories; in some sense, this use could be termed "fieldwork" (Ellis, 2004; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Richardson and St. Pierre (2018) also noted that journaling can be considered as a creative analytical writing practice and stated, "Where better to develop your sense of Self—your voice—than in the process of doing your research?" (p. 1420). My writing evolved from sketch notes of my day with monotonous details early in the study to pouring out my feelings for each day as the study progressed. I also had dark periods where I did not journal for a few days. These gaps in my journaling were most associated with times when my mood was dour. Regardless, these journal entries often served as a jumping-off point for my blogging.

Blogging and social media.

In order to create a space where I could share my thoughts and experiences in an open, transparent, and vulnerable way, I created a blog entitled, *This Principal's Journey*, located at www.thisprincipalsjourney.blog. I would often layer my experiences in my current school, pulling in thoughts from my journal along with prior experiences. In this manner, I was able to create a layered collage of my perceptions and reflections (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ronai, 1995). During the data generation period, I wrote five blogs. The results of this information are shared in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Reader Interaction with This Principal's Journey Blog

Blog title	Subject matter	Blog views	Facebook likes	Facebook comments	Twitter engagements
Introduction to blog & I am	Introductory comments on blog/poem on background	308	56	33	15
The power of one	Overcoming the odds, the difference one person can make	281	73	87	11
Chasing passion	Rationale for leaving Assistant Superintendent role for Principal, perspective	127	32	7	2
I am not a fraud…anymore!	Comparing principal tenure #1 to #2, vulnerability and transparency	127	37	31	6
Children are not red or blue	Politics of immigration, political climate for immigrant Hispanic population, taking a stand	454	34	37	86
	Totals	1,297	232	195	120

Note. Statistics related to blog available at www.thisprincipalsjourney.blog. Data collected as of January 13, 2019.

To protect the privacy of non-participants, the reader comments feature was turned off, however, I was able to track the number of people who read or—at least clicked on—my blogs. In addition, I shared a link to each blog entry on my personal Facebook and Twitter pages. Again, for the sake of privacy for non-participants, I only counted likes and comments on Facebook and engagements on Twitter.

Photos.

Photos were used in this study sparingly based on ethical considerations. Most photographs positioned me in the context of the blog or the narrative that I wrote. The photographs provided a context that allowed the readers to enter into the scene and find themselves there (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As this study sought to embrace the social constructionism epistemology, I sought to build a connection with the reader. Margolis and Zunjarwad (2018) noted, "photographs are "social facts"" (p. 1029), and it was my intent through the photographs, to create a social space within which the reader is forced to interact with me face-to-face.

Narrative writing.

Through narrative writing, I generated data as I studied and lived the CRSJL experience, focusing on the intersection of the subculture at my school, my history and experiences, and my perceptions as I attempted to lead my school in a culturally responsive and socially just manner. Yet, to write my blogs and narratives, I utilized my personal documents (i.e., emails to staff, presentations, meeting agendas) and my personal calendar to verify the events as they happened. Bochner and Ellis (2016) refer to this as *memory work*. Through this process, I made my best effort to create authentic, clear, and meaningful narratives.

The data were generated in an on-going circular fashion that involved my memory, experiences, reflections, imagination, and discussions. The data focused on my procedures,

thoughts, meetings, and conversations that occurred as part of my daily work as a principal. I continually asked myself the question, "What is going on here?" The information gathered through the answering of that question provided rich, thick detail of my lived experience as both a researcher and the researched (Adams et al., 2015; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). This data was then used to formulate brief narratives through the use of vignettes. Each narrative required repeated readings and reflection. The process was labor-intensive, time-consuming, extremely introspective, and oftentimes completely frustrating.

This study used writing as a method of inquiry that positioned me with a look inwards towards self through using my narrative writing, and then outward towards culture (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Like more traditional research, my study also needed to consider credibility, confirmability, and dependability. In order to position my research in a manner that supports credibility, I sought to maintain a high level of authenticity. Openly providing a vulnerable self provides a credibility that helps the reader make a connection with the writer (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Next, to create confirmability in my work, it was critical that I continually check for accuracy.

To do this, I considered the narrative rationality tests of fidelity and probability (Adams et al., 2015). To determine fidelity, I continually asked if my vignettes were sound and exhibited a truthful quality. To test probability, I had to look at the vignettes through the lens of the reader to determine if the narratives could realistically have happened. Further, to maintain dependability, I used a crystallization approach to my data generation and maintained fidelity throughout the research process (Ellingson, 2008; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Richardson (2018) stated the following about moving away from the absolute of triangulation to the more appropriate *crystallization*:

Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 1404). The summary of the data generation for this study is noted in Figure 6.

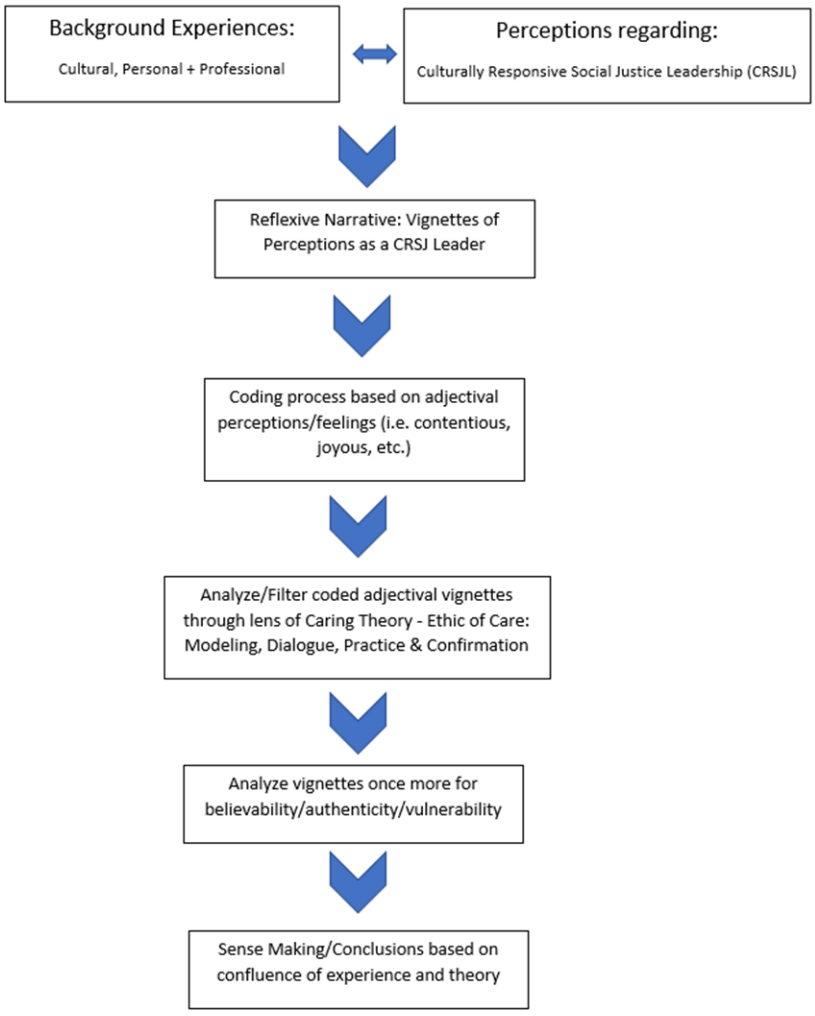

Figure 6: Summary of Narrative Writing Process

In Richardson's imagery, there is the assumption that the reader and the writer can view from different angles to understand a study. Similarly, I did not seek to provide a single truth

through this study. Rather, I positioned the vignettes in a manner that allowed my perspective to be expressed, while leaving it to the readers to formulate their own interpretations

Vignette format.

This autoethnography utilized a varied narrative approach that included poetry, evocative stories and sketch ethnodramas that describe my lived experience (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). In these lived experiences, I wrote from my perspective as the narrator. In writing narrations as the researcher, Adams et al. (2015) stated:

> The character of your narrator is a mechanism for connecting yourself and your experience to others - other characters in the story, as well as readers - and a medium for creating knowledge, understanding, and meaning around what happens in our lives/cultures. (p. 78)

As I chose the data to include in the vignettes, I wrote the stories in a way that varied the approach and allowed the readers to place themselves in the scene in a way that was engaging both functionally and aesthetically. Each scene is meant to tell a story of the culture and a story about me (Adams et al., 2015). I chose each story based on the visceral impact it had on me as I lived the experience of a White man, reflecting on my past while trying to be a CRSJL. Each vignette could stand alone and allow the reader to find meaning in each story. Taken collectively, however, the vignettes tell a story that expose my practices, feelings, and beliefs.

Reflection of CRSJL experience.

Resonance is a scientific term that is sometimes associated with echoes. With echoes, sound emanates from a source, hits a solid surface, and bounces back in repeating waves (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2014). In this study, resonance occurred as I read through my data and kept coming back to a theme or subject that stuck with me as I contemplated my experience attempting to lead a school as a CRSJL. I wrote vignettes as I considered the ways that

the experiences resonated with me. In thinking with the story and then providing access to the reader about my experience, I summarized my reflections after each vignette. Each reflection included the rationale for the vignette title, background schema, significance of the vignette relative to the study, and explanation of CRSJL actions.

In the reflection section of each vignette, I also approached the stories by looking for evidence, and absence of CRSJL practices. Each story that I shared, was viewed through the precepts of trying to be culturally responsive and socially just. I asked myself the question, "Will this vignette allow for the reader to make sense of CRSJL"? If I answered affirmatively, the vignette was included in the data for analysis. Specifically, as I generated the data, I looked to see whether I:

- was critically self-aware (Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2005; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ishimaru, 2013; Shields, 2010; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011),
- sought to close the achievement gap for marginalized students (Berkovich, 2014; DeMatthews, 2018; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011),
- strengthened the link between community, families, students and the school (Cavanagh, Vigil, & Garcia, 2014; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2009; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011; Wang, 2018),
- created an inclusive environment by improving school structures (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Khalifa, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2009; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Theoharis, 2007), and,
- provided professional development for faculty and staff around culturally responsive and socially just practices (Cavanagh et al., 2014; Gay, 2010; Khalifa, 2011; Khalifa

et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2009; Sleeter, 2001; Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2018).

Methods of analysis.

In this study, vignettes served as the data to be analyzed via a narrative under analysis approach (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In the realm of autoethnography, it is uncommon to use the term *document analysis*, as this term is typically associated with other qualitative or quantitative research methodologies (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). This approach to analysis is similar to a narrative under analysis; the stories were utilized to generate themes as data and then "presented in the form of abstractions" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Vignettes were written in the first person and chosen based on how I resonated with the experiences. Each story was analyzed in three ways. First, each vignette was given a title that represented the experience. Second, adjectives of my feelings followed the title. Finally, each vignette was analyzed based on how I approached my experiences through Noddings' Caring Theory. As noted, this study used a non-linear circular approach that often employed non-sequential processes, whether in data generation or data analysis. In the analysis of vignettes, I often changed the title, adjectives, and application of the theoretical lens after reflecting on the experience.

Title creation.

The title of each vignette was determined after multiple readings and reflections on each experience. In looking at each story, the title emerged, morphed, and solidified when I felt like it resonated with me in three ways. First, I determined if the title represented the experience as it happened. I asked myself, "Does this title make sense considering the content within the story?". Second, I reflected on the attractiveness of each title and I wanted the readers to feel compelled to

consume the contents of each vignette. Finally, I determined if each vignette title was related to my attempts to lead in a CRSJL manner.

Adjectival categorization.

For each vignette, the title is noted in bold font with an adjectival category to follow. The adjectives describe the feelings I had as I lived—and, then, reflected on—the experience of trying to be a CRSJL. Within autoethnography, coding is often conducted based on feelings (Adams et al., 2015). Autoethnography deploys a spiral approach to research and coding often emerges within the process of a study over time (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). After multiple readings of each vignette, I coded my feelings. After each reading of my vignette, I would note my reflect on my feelings that I had after I read the story. Then, in the margins of my vignette, I would note those feelings in one or two words. After several readings of each vignette, I settled on the following adjectives: frustrated, fearful, energized, contentious, joyful, sad, and tentative. These adjectives were most representative of my experiences as they occurred most frequently in the coding process. The vignettes could not be categorized as a single feeling; rather, the vignettes fell into multiple themes.

Link of vignette to Noddings' Caring Theory.

In narrative under analysis, it is the autoethnographer's responsibility to ask questions to make sense of the confluence of the cultural and theoretical to reach personal truth (Ellis, 2004). Adams et al. (2015) stated, "For autoethnographers, theory and story share a reciprocal, symbiotic relationship. Theory asks about and explains the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture; story is the mechanism that illustrates and embodies these nuances and happenings" (p. 90). In this way, Noddings' Caring Theory allowed me to understand the nuances of leading a

school as a CRSJL principal. As I delved into the introspection of self through coding vignettes with adjectival feeling categories, I referenced the four components of the ethic of care.

More specifically, after I wrote a vignette, I analyzed each selection based on four constructs within Noddings' Ethic of Care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2015). As I analyzed each vignette, I focused on determining to what degree I modeled, dialogued, practiced and confirmed a caring approach as I attempted to be a CRSJL (Noddings, 2015). Specifically, as I reflected on my role as a leader, I asked myself if I was modeling, engaging in dialogue, practicing, or confirming caring by myself to my faculty and staff. If the vignette aligned with Caring Theory, the vignette was included. This look at each vignette through the theoretical framework offered by Noddings assisted me in the drive towards sense-making as I attempt to lead a school as a CRSJL (Ellis, 2004).

Once the data was codified, and each vignette was analyzed based on Noddings' Caring Theory, the connection between theory components and my attempts to lead as a CRSJL—and its inclusion in the research results—was explained based on the connections between existing research, theory, and the effort to fill gaps in extant knowledge (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Adams et al. (2015) summarized the connection of theory to analysis as follows: "Theory is a way to understand-think with and through, ask questions about, and act on-the experiences and happenings in our stories" (p. 90).

Findings.

In summary, vignettes were analyzed based on thematic resonance (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). For this study, as the data were initially collected, I read each vignette and noted my feelings as I attempted to lead in a culturally responsive and socially just way. After the data collection period concluded, each vignette, was re-read to establish and confirm three things. I confirmed the

title, adjectival categorization, and the vignette fit with Noddings' Caring Theory. In my research process, I wrote eight vignettes. Seven on them were included, while one was excluded.

I summarized each vignette's CRSJL traits, ethic of care, and adjectival categorization in Table 2.

Table 2

CRSJL Traits, Ethic of Care, and Adjectival Categorization Related to Blog

Vignette	CRSJL traits	Centers and ethic of care components exhibited	Adjectival categorization
I am not a fraud…anymore	Critical self-awareness	Caring and Continuity, Modeling	Frustrated/Tentative
The power of one	Critical self-awareness	Caring and Continuity, Caring for the Inner Circle, Modeling	Energized/Fearful
It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood	Community involvement	Caring for the Inner Circle, Confirmation, Modeling & Practice	Energized/Joyful
Ninety days are over	Improving school structure	Caring and Continuity, Caring for the Inner Circle, Caring for Ideas, Modeling	Energized/Tentative
Are we at a Fiesta?	Community involvement, culturally responsive environment, culturally responsive teacher professional learning	Caring for the Inner Circle, Caring for Strangers and Distant Others, Modeling & Practice	Energized/Joyful
Trauma collides at race, poverty, and deportation	Culturally responsive environment	Caring for Strangers and Distant Others, Modeling/Dialogue	Fearful/Sad
Children are not red or blue	Culturally responsive environment	Caring for Strangers and Distant Others, Modeling	Contentious/Frustrated

Note. Data collected as of January 13, 2019.

Issues of Quality

The desired result of this autoethnography was to produce high quality work while: (a) answering my research questions, (b) arriving at some understanding of my lived experience as a CRSJL principal, and (c) engaging the readers in a narrative journey so that they might construct their own reflections on CRSJL. Within the autoethnographic field, Cho and Trent (2014) stated, "It is typical for research methodologists to offer a set of evaluative criteria that are claimed to be relevant and necessary" (p. 689). Both Richardson (2018) and Tracy (2010) offer criteria to judge qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, I used Tracy's (2010) eight "big-tent" criteria to evaluate my work. Once each vignette was completed, and to decide on the quality of each story, I contemplated Tracy's eight criteria for excellent qualitative research. Her criteria and questions are listed in Table 3 (Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) points to the necessity of criteria as a guide for conducting an autoethnography. The use of a set criteria also allows researchers to speak of scholarly work with a common language.

In considering my work through Tracy's (2010) criteria, I am immediately drawn to the worthiness of the topic, resonance, significance of contribution, and sincerity. My study is positioned at the intersection of hegemony, care, marginalization, high SES, CLD, and a White male principal attempting to lead a school as a CRSJL. With the current climate in the country surrounding immigration, improving educational achievement, and increasing diversity, I believe that my investigation is relevant and timely. The use of Caring Theory, as a male, is interesting and the combination of SJL and CRSL represents a significant component in the worthiness of topic criteria. Resonance was a desired goal of this study and I believe that my blogs and associated narratives evoke feelings.

Table 3

Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve
Worthy topic	The topic of the research is • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting
Rich rigor	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes
Sincerity	The study is characterized by • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges
Credibility	The research is marked by • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling • Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections
Resonance	The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalizations • Transferable findings
Significant Contribution	The research provides a significant contribution • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically
Ethical	The research considers • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)
Meaningful coherence	The study • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each

Note. Adapted from Tracy (2010).

Still, as I explored my approach to CRSJL as a White male, who is also a formerly abused student, the study provided insight to practices and provided a significant contribution as I believe I am the first researcher to explore my topic in the manner in which I did. I believe that my transparency and expressed vulnerabilities through my blogs and vignettes position my work as sincere.

I look at Tracy's (2010) rigor, credibility, ethical, and meaningful coherence criteria separately. For me, rigor is shown through the depth and breadth with which I approach my study. I believe that my vignettes exhibit a rich quality. I endeavored to maintain a level of plausibility throughout my work that supported credibility. I sought to provide a thick description that allowed the readers to call upon multiple points to form their understanding. Ethically, my approach was to cause no harm to myself or others. Finally, I believe that my study achieved meaningful coherence because I was able to answer my research questions through findings that are tied to theory and research.

Ethics.

In order to conduct this autoethnographic study about my perceptions of CRSJL in a northern Georgia county school, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board. In addition, I was granted permission by the northern Georgia county school district to conduct the research. To protect the identities of any persons included within the narrative data, composite characters with pseudonyms were used to represent the staff at Joyner Elementary and at Smoke Rise Elementary (Angrosino, 1998; Ellis, 2004). Further, based on the personal nature of the content that is part of this study, I understood the potentially physical, emotional, and professional toll that this endeavor might cause me (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In addition, based on the private nature of the content included in the research, I consulted with my wife and children to avoid any

potential damage to them (Ellis, 2004). My loved ones who were not deceased, granted me permission to use their photographs. To maintain an ethical approach, it was critical that my story was told in a manner that my family would support. I consulted with my family to determine if they objected to any portion of the research. There were no instances where I had to revise or delete any sections that were objectionable for my family; however, for my self-protection, I excluded one vignette titled *All You Want is the Money* because the contents could have proven too costly to me in a multitude of ways.

My findings are compiled in this section using the following format. First, I provide the title of the vignette and associated adjectival categorization. Next, I reproduce the vignette from my records maintained during the study. Third, I provide my reflection of the experiences described in the vignette. Finally, I add any remaining observations tied to Noddings' Caring Theory based on my experiences.

I am not a fraud…anymore! (Frustrated/Tentative)

Vignette. *This vignette comes from my blog, www.thisprincipalsjourney.blog.The title of this blog speaks volumes and says nothing all at the same time. In many respects, I would claim that I am an authentic and transparent principal, husband, dad, friend, brother, son...person. That has been made clear by some of my revelations in this online venture. Yet, looking back on my history as an educational leader, by denying who I was, I have been a bit of a fraud.*

I have attempted to rectify my wrongs in my return to the principalship. I am aware that to be true to who I am, I must speak with courage. It is scary! With all of that said, this journey is about more than me! I have returned to the schoolhouse with an unwavering

commitment to do what is right for my students. To understand this, I must go back to my first principal role:

My prior school [Smoke Rise Elementary] *had an approximate 50% free and reduced lunch rate, which meant that half of our students were living in poverty. To give further perspective on this poverty (based on last year's* [2017-2018 school year] *qualification information), a family of three qualified for free lunch when they earn less than $26,546 annually. To get reduced lunch pricing, that same family has to make less than $37,777 to qualify. So let's say that the family consists of a single mother, 1st grader and an infant. The take-home check for that mother might be $1,660 to $2,520/month, on the upper end of the qualifying amounts. Let that soak in. We are talking about true poverty when you consider the fact that that amount of money has to cover rent, food, utilities, clothes, diapers, day-care, transportation, etc.*

Here is an example of my silence...my fraudulence...if you will.

I was leading a faculty meeting and homework was a topic. More specifically, I was concerned that we had students that were being placed in the hallway or being punished because they did not complete their homework.

Here's what I didn't say in that meeting.

"I am that kid in the hallway!"

I was that kid who qualified for free and reduced lunches throughout my youth. I was an abused, poor and neglected child. At one point the single-wide trailer that we lived in had a hole in the floor, letting in cold air. Worse still, we set mouse traps in our oven. As for homework, there was no one to make me do homework.

With this as a backdrop, I set out to address the issue of students sitting in the hallway. I wanted to make them see the injustice from a safe self-protected distance. I made no demands of the teachers. Instead, I danced around the topic and shared my logic and data. I stated that it did not make much sense to send students who didn't do their homework out of the class. Meanwhile, those students missed instruction.

I questioned whether we knew our children's backgrounds. What I heard from some was that "these kids need to learn responsibility and get their homework done," and "they won't cut them any slack in middle school."

While all of this seems a little bit trite, it struck a nerve with me. As I stood in front of the faculty and my voice trembled, I then shared the research regarding homework. The research says that homework is not necessarily a beneficial practice. This is especially true for kids who don't have someone at home who can help them.

I became visibly emotional in this conversation and exhorted our teachers to re-think their practices of punishing children for not doing their homework. I never mentioned the real truth about my background. I did not let them inside to see why I felt as strongly as I did.

As I started this new role [as principal at Joyner Elementary], I shed false pretenses. I'm taking every opportunity to question situations where students may be in settings that they just can't help.

My current school is 94% free and reduced, high poverty, 85% Hispanic, and populated with the majority of students who are learning English as a second language. Each day, I see myself in the students that I serve. Whether they're Black, Hispanic, White or Asian, there I am...even as a White guy. When I think of the trauma that many of my students

face on a daily basis, I empathize and strive to help everybody in our building understand what our kids face regularly through reminders, coaching and conversation.

Even with this new-found approach to leading, I still have fear. I am fearful that my actions will not be viewed as supportive for the teachers in my building, or my students, or my district. I am afraid of being judged as preachy or too soft. I am petrified that I may not be doing enough.

THAT is the REAL Me!

Reflection.

"I am not a fraud…anymore" is from my blog that was written as I documented my journey as an autoethnographer. I chose this vignette as the first in the series of my data for three reasons. First, it connects my first experience as principal at Smoke Rise Elementary with my second tenure at Joyner Elementary School. Secondly, the emotions that I felt at that faculty meeting over seven years ago still resonate with me. And finally, the recognition of my new resolute confidence, coupled with an abiding fear expressed in this vignette, allow a transparent view into my attempt as a leader to be culturally responsive and socially just.

Prior to this meeting, I was a fraud as an educator…not fraudulent in the sense that I did things in a way that was unethical or wrong. Rather my sin of omission was not being vulnerable and opening up to those who reported to me as the principal. As a leader, I should be the first over the hill into battle; an example for others to emulate and ultimately someone who champions for all of the children, especially those living on the margins. By omitting my past, I was not advocating for the least of the students in my building.

While action is not exhibited in this vignette in my current role, there is an unspoken promise of advocacy. While the tenets of CRSJL prescribe corrective measures when injustices

exist, the first course of action is recognition via critical self-awareness (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In my statement, "I empathize and strive to help everybody in our building understand what our kids face regularly through reminders, coaching and conversation," there is an acknowledgment that I am continually approaching the topics with a consistent, measured, and sustained emphasis on our children and their needs. The efforts to be a CRSJL are daunting and require a measured urgency that can only be maintained through a steady approach. For me to be able to maintain the balance between keeping my job, staying sane, feeling fulfilled, maintaining teacher buy-in, and ultimately advocating for the students under my care as principal requires patience, love, and pervasive and constant focus. The hare will win the race.

The adjectives *frustrated* and *tentative* are the most appropriate for this vignette. Frustration was thoroughly emanating from every pore of my body as I spoke at Smoke Rise Elementary at that faculty meeting. I wanted so badly for everyone to think the way that I thought, yet I received pushback. This vignette was about homework. My time at that school was a brief one and a half years. In some respects, I left that school for a promotion to an assistant superintendent role. That move seemed reasonable, yet in hindsight and further reflection through this study, I would say that my move away from Smoke Rise Elementary was driven more from frustration than from a desire to move upwardly.

In "I am not a fraud…anymore," my experiences at Joyner Elementary would be described as tentative. My actions are clear and have been shared with my faculty and staff. They know my background and my desires for our students. Still, there is a tentativeness that is clear to me in this vignette. I find myself battling a desire to move boldly, loudly, and quickly. Yet, I hold back out of fear of getting too far out in front of my school without anyone following. I do

not feel badly about this in the sense that I am unfulfilled or doing a bad job. I want to be patient, yet I want everything now.

Ethic of care.

In reflection, I feel as if I attempted to model an ethic of care. During that faculty meeting discussing homework at Smoke Rise Elementary, I pulled in the caring and continuity center of care. Noddings stated that, "schools should be committed to a great moral purpose: to care for children so that they, too, will be prepared to care" (p. 64). At Smoke Rise Elementary, my effort was there, but it fell flat. While I do not feel as if I was entirely successful in delivering the message, I was modeling—without a theoretical or scholarly background—what I felt was best to help our students. I reacted based on my gut without understanding. Through the action of posting this vignette in a blog, I have shared insight to those that read my story and my transparency with my current faculty and staff allows a greater sense of satisfaction.

The power of one. (Energized/Fearful)

Vignette. *Are YOU The Power of One?*

To look at me...you might see me as a professional looking guy. My nails are trimmed, I wear a suit, my hair is combed and I am an educated white man. I have a lot going for me! The suit that I wear is one that is quite different from what lies under the surface.

You see? I am an anomaly.

And here's the story. I was born into a "traditional" family. I was the youngest of three. My dad was a plumber and my mother a nurse. Seemingly we were an example of a modest middle-class typical family. Yet, there was a darkness lying in wait.

Figure 7. Circa 1972. My Mother, Me (in the Arms of My Dad), My Dad, My Brother, and My Sister.

My mother entrapped my father by getting knocked up. But first...a little background on my dad. My father was a rather unassuming young man who struggled with ulcerative colitis throughout his teens and early twenties. He was rather unsure of himself and kept most of his emotions in...and perhaps this was manifested through his stomach ailment. As he was the oldest boy in his family, he was thrust into a greater lead role when his father passed away of a massive heart attack. Making matters worse, my grandfather died in my father's arms. And then there was my mother. During WWII, she was conceived. While her father was away fighting the war, my grandmother divorced my mother's biological father and married another man...my mother's step-father. Between

my step-grandfather and grandmother, they drove my mother hard and they pushed her to help in the family restaurant that they ran.

My mother, given the first chance, latched on to my father after meeting him at a bar. They were both seeking freedom and found it in each other. My mother got pregnant and as was typical in that day, they got married. Less than nine months later, my brother was born. Followed two years later, my sister was born and then I came along four years after that.

Figure 8. Circa 1973. Mother, Me (in the Arms of My Sister), and My Brother

By the time I was five, my parents lack of friendship became too much and they separated. They divorced in my first-grade year.

Figure 9. Circa 1976. Me - Kindergarten

From this point, life fractured into a million little pieces. After the divorce, I went with my mother. She remarried a bi-sexual man. Together, with the man who was my step-father, my mother experimented with drugs, witchcraft, and her sexuality. And...I...was a victim of this experimentation. I tried the drugs...marijuana...hash...cocaine. I drank. I was beaten. I witnessed orgies. I was sexually abused incestuously. I had sex with adult lesbian women. I lived in poverty. Our single wide trailer had holes in the floor. We set mouse traps in our oven. I was the only white kid in an all Black classroom. I was mugged, robbed, called "cracker" and "honky". This all happened before I turned 12 years old. Eventually, my mother divorced my step-father and committed herself to another woman as a lesbian partner.

Figure 10. Circa 1980. Me (Smoker, Drinker, Abused – at the bottom of a Closet – 4th Grade)

After a year of high school with virtually no guidance, or oversight, my grades were horrible and I was searching. My father, who had remarried agreed to take me in and I

left to live with him and my step-mother. Their home was one of rules, church, the sweet smell of chocolate chip cookies, my Grandma and dinners at 5:30. We soon settled into a routine and while they did not push me too hard, my grades improved and life was "normal". But you see this is where the story moves to another level. Even with my improved circumstances, my experiences would have predicted a high statistical probability that I drop-out and land with a rough outcome. With that...the POWER of ONE!

Figure 11. Circa 1989. My Brother, Me, My Dad, and My Sister

May I introduce you to Ms. Montana?

Ms. Montana: Ladies and gentlemen. We are discussing the industrial revolution. Mr. Hitzges what is one fact that found interesting in last night's reading?

Me: Well...I thought that the industrial revolution shifted us quickly from agrarian to industrial rather quickly.

Ms. Montana: Thank you. Mr. Hitzges

Ms. Montana was my AP US History teacher. She was a warm demander in that class; never raised her voice and she expected everyone in her class to pass that AP test. But her attributes go much deeper.

Ms. Montana: October 1988 - Mr. Hitzges, where will you be going to college?

Me: Ms. Montana, I will not be going to college. My parents do not believe in a college education. My step-mother said that her cousins got college degrees at a high price and then they didn't use their degrees.

Ms. Montana: January 1989 - Mr. Hitzges, where will you be going to college?

Me: Ms. Montana, I told you that my parents do not believe in college.

In the meantime, I was working an almost full-time job during this time. I registered for the SAT on my own. I fell asleep during the test. I scored poorly.

Ms. Montana: May 1989 - Mr. Hitzges, where will you be going to college?

Me: Ms. Montana, I told you that my parents do not believe in college. I will not be going to college.

Ms. Montana: Mr. Hitzges, I believe that you will be going to college!

Me: (unspoken) Shrug and sigh.

Moderator: June 1989 - (onstage during the Scholars Award Program). "...and the Broward Community College Principal's Scholarship goes to: Jamie Hitzges"

Ms. Montana nominated me for that scholarship. She saw something in me. She saw what I could be. And with that, she changed the trajectory of my life.

I went to a two-year community college for free!

Without Ms. Montana, I wouldn't have completed my teaching degree. After my third year teaching, my high school sweetheart wife wanted to move closer to her parents. We packed up and moved our two children to Georgia.

Figure 12. Circa 1996. College Graduation – My Brother, Me, and My Sister

Figure 13. Wedding Day 1992, My Wife and Me

I left teaching...to go to Motorola. I worked at Motorola for six years, making my way up the corporate ladder serving as a senior business planning analyst. I worked with factories in China, Malaysia, Mexico, Ireland, Brazil and the US. The prerequisite for that job? A 4-year degree! Thank you, Ms. Montana!

After six years, I became increasingly sad that I was missing out on being with my family and I left to return to the classroom. I took a $65K pay cut. The true payoff was that I worked with my wife on the same third grade team and we drove to work every day with our two children. Thank you, Ms. Montana!

To offset the pay cut, both my wife and I pursued advanced degrees. After finishing my specialist degree I got a job as an assistant principal and then became principal. After those combined 4 years in administration, I was offered an assistant superintendent of finance role. My years at Motorola served me well. Thank you, Ms. Montana!

Figure 14. 2016, Me – Assistant Superintendent- Sharing the Power of One Speech

You see without Ms. Montana, I wouldn't have gotten my degree. I wouldn't have been a teacher. I wouldn't have been able to work at Motorola and gain business experience. I wouldn't have been a principal or gain experience as an assistant superintendent.

That is the Power of One! We all hold that power! You never know what you may say or do for someone that will change the trajectory of his or her life! Ms. Montana was my Power of One! In our roles as educational leaders, we have the responsibility to share possibility, dreams and potential lying beneath the surface of each of every student. Can you be the Power of One? Will you be the Power of One?

Reflection.

This vignette fits well as the second in my research, as it basically begins with my quest to be a CRSJL. While the desire had always been there, I was never explicit in my motivations and what I hoped to be as an educator. "The Power of One" is my second blog entry, and it documents my first faculty meeting as principal at Joyner Elementary.

My first official day in my role as principal at Joyner Elementary was July 1, 2017. There was minimal opportunity for transition, and I had very little time to acclimate myself to the community, faculty, and staff or to any of my new principal peers. That very brief first summer leading up to preplanning was a whirlwind. I felt exhilarated and overwhelmed in many respects. I made the move with passion, but it also came with all of the questions about planning and logistics for a school of 725+ students and approximately 100 faculty and staff. It had also been five years since I last held a principalship.

Even with a very short amount of time left before my first official day as principal with the Joyner Elementary faculty and staff, gossip had already made its way to me. The jibber-jabber questioned my motives for returning to principalship. Some of the versions of gossip

ranged from speculation that I was demoted, to rumors that Joyner Elementary was my stepping stone to a superintendency, to various other conjectures. Within this context, I felt it was critical that I share my background, my beliefs, and the reasons for why I would make a move counter to what was expected.

I set out to build a foundation for my leadership by spending a great deal of the first morning of preplanning how to share my rationale for joining Joyner Elementary, as well as a plan for sharing "The Power of One." For many, this would be the first time they got to meet ME as the new principal. This was my opportunity to reveal my true self, via a talk that I had given before, by discussing the struggles that I endured as a youth and how just one person can change a person's trajectory.

I started this faculty meeting with a nervous and excited nature. We shared breakfast and conducted some "getting to know you" activities. I was eager with anticipation and started by sharing my work background. I documented my roles as assistant superintendent, principal, senior business analyst, and teacher. I also provided insight into my motivation to return to the schoolhouse and why Joyner Elementary was my choice.

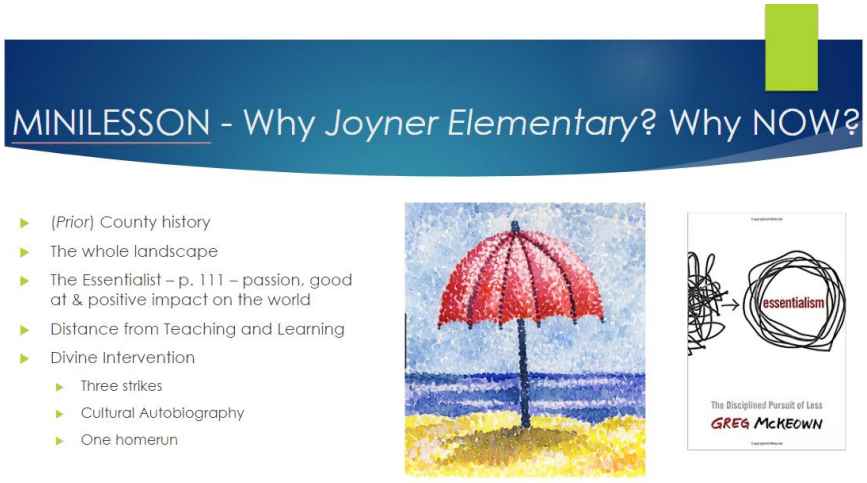

Figure 15. Slide from First Preplanning Meeting at Joyner Elementary (Author, 2016).

I shared my epiphany that came from reading *Essentialism*, by Greg McKeown. I shared the three questions that McKeown asked and how I could not affirmatively answer the question about my passion (McKeown, 2014). I also shared that I missed being with students, and I did not want to become pigeon-holed as a finance guy. Additionally, I shared the tragedy that raged for five years as I worked as assistant superintendent. On top of the Great Recession, my son became an amputee at the age of 13 after he was accidentally shot in a hunting accident, illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 16. My Son's X-Ray from a Hunting Accident (2012).

My father died. My brother died. And then, my mother died. Those events, I shared, were enough to cause anyone to pause and question life.

Figure 17. (From left to right) – My Dad, Me, and My Brother; How I Choose to Remember Them (1989).

Still, I went on. I wanted to be closer to teaching and learning, and I enjoyed being in an atmosphere with teachers and students. I discussed my desire to live vicariously through the kids in our building. I also shared how Divine intervention played a role in my arrival at Joyner Elementary. I indicated that I had applied for superintendent roles but did not get an interview. I also shared that I wrote a cultural autobiography for my doctoral program coursework that led me to reflect on my first role as principal. In this reflection, I shared that I felt as if I was not true to myself or the teachers and that my goal was to go back to the principalship to try again. Additionally, I discussed the timing of my new superintendent's call when the role at Joyner Elementary came available. I referenced the confluence of all of these events as the perfect storm that propelled me to take action and leave a county in which I had been successful. Lastly, I shared that my desire was to take the perspective and knowledge that I had gained in the central office and use them to help me be a better version of me for Joyner Elementary. After this explanation, we took a break.

I did what I did not do the first time as a principal: I assumed a vulnerable position. I allowed everyone to understand who I was and how I was able to choose the calling of education. I was a nervous wreck going into this meeting. I had never really owned who I was prior to this day in front of educators. What they probably saw on the outside was in affable, well-groomed White man with a sense of humor, sarcasm, and passion. I went through the delivery of "The Power of One" and discussed the person, Ms. Montana, who made a difference in my life, and I shared the trials and tribulations that I had gone through as a youngster.

This is where I made the connection to CRSJL via critical self-reflection. I explicitly recognized that our building was comprised of a huge majority of poor, mostly Hispanic students. I relayed that every student that walks through our doors could be living like I did. I

exclaimed that I wanted every person in our building to make a difference and think of every student as me. I added that we could help our students break the cycle and escape poverty. They can escape anything.

As I ended, and we broke for lunch, there was a palpable emotional tension and some tears in the room. When we continued the meeting after our lunch break, we worked on some vision and mission work that went smoothly. At the very end of the meeting we did a snowball activity where I asked them all to write down one thing that they had learned that day. The activity was awesomely confirming for me. It represented me—as an instructional leader—closing out a lesson, and it also represented a confirmation of the message that I was trying to send. After the faculty and staff wrote their reflections, they balled up the sheets of paper into balls and threw them simultaneously across the room. Where the snowballs fell, each faculty and staff member picked one up and read the name of the person who owned the snowball and the reflection. Many of the responses indicated that they recognized my passion for what I do and why I do it. Most importantly, a very large majority of the reflections indicated that they wanted to be the Power of One.

Energized and *fearful* are the two adjectives that emerged as I reread and pondered the meaning of this experience as I sought to be a CRSJL. I felt like I had the energy to run a marathon as I gave that opening day monologue. While I moved about that room delivering my message, I felt I could have literally walked miles. My energy was kinetic, and I spoke at a rapid pace. As is typical when I get nervous, I could not stop moving. With that energy, there is also an abiding fear that emerges every time I share my background. I wonder: Will I be judged as too preachy? Will I be judged as a phony? Will I be judged as a radical bleeding-heart liberal? Will I

say too much? Will my words hurt my family? Will my sharing hurt my career? When sharing my history, there was—and still remains—fear.

In reflection, this vignette served as a jumping-off point for the ownership of my story. I opened myself up to being vulnerable and courageous. In hindsight, I made a move towards CRSJL, but I failed to recognize my White male privilege in the story of overcoming the odds within "The Power of One." Even with this self-professed need to improve, I feel as though every journey begins with a move in the right direction. For me, this meeting was a giant step towards CRSJL.

Ethic of care.

This vignette came prior to any reading about Nodding's Caring Theory. In sharing "The Power of One", I inadvertently attempted to model an ethic of care for the faculty and staff. When I showed the faculty and staff my willingness to be vulnerable, open, honest about the struggles of someone who is living on the margins, I was modeling for them the life that one of the students at Joyner Elementary might experience. Noddings stated, "We are seized by the needs of another" (p. 16). In this experience and vignette, one could argue that there were multiple avenues where the needs of another were seized. First, my needs as a young student were taken and held tightly by Ms. Montana. Then, I argued that we needed to be seized by the needs of our students. Then, in that room, that day, with the tears, one could argue that my vulnerability and sharing was seized by the faculty and staff.

Caring and continuity and caring for the inner circle were two of Noddings' centers of care that were evident in this vignette. Noddings stated, "Do we bear the responsibility for the moral growth of colleagues as we do for friends and family members? The answer is yes" (p. 103). As I stood with trembling legs, a quivering voice, and dry mouth, I challenged our faculty

and staff to recognize and respond to those challenging circumstances as our children come to us each and every day.

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. (Energized/Joyful*)*

Vignette. *I had been on the job less than two weeks at Joyner Elementary. I was approached about taking a school bus tour into our community to which I quickly agreed. The plan was to have several teachers on the bus. This represented a fantastic opportunity to see our neighborhoods for me as well as the teachers. In addition to benefits for me and the faculty and staff, our families would see us in a different light. We would not be dressed in fancy clothes, and most importantly, we would be going to our families rather than them always coming to us.*

The faculty and staff of Joyner Elementary had never done anything like this. The schedule was arranged and we gathered materials to take with us. We had over twenty teachers and paraprofessionals on the bus along with popcorn, balloons, games, music and popsicles. For me, this was the first time that I was able to meet many of the faculty and staff.

We embarked on that hot and muggy July afternoon. There was no air condition on the bus and we were all sweaty and nervous with excitement. We stopped at many of our poorest neighborhoods. The housing was substandard in many instances. Some of the trailers did not have doors. Others, had broken windows and tarps on roofs. The facial expressions on those of us on the bus ranged from disbelief, to pity, to sadness, to love.

Figure 18. Joyner Elementary Neighborhood

As we pulled in to each neighborhood, I jumped right in to unloading at each stop and I mixed and mingled, spoke with parents and children and generally had a good time. While the opportunity was clearly a benefit to me, I modeled the courage to engage with our families. I utilized as much of the limited Spanish that I could muster. It was awkward because the families had no idea who I was. A lot of eyes were on me, yet I could show no hesitation. I smiled. I played. I dreamed.

I dreamed that every student and parent would see their teachers and Joyner Elementary in a new light. This light represents interest in their lives…their culture…their experience. I also dreamed that our teachers and paras would see this background of our families and work towards incorporating that understanding into their daily approach.

Reflection. The title of the vignette is an homage to the television show, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. The idyllic nature of Mr. Rogers' show positioned sometimes difficult conversations around race and injustice in a way that seemed so digestible. To me, this journey

into our neighborhoods stripped bare our preconceived notions of where our children come from and allowed us to understand our children's poverty in a very real, human way. The reality was off-putting and shook some to their core. Yet, even with the potentially negative feelings, this trip represented a very real CRSJL practice of engaging students, families, and the community. During this first summer, it would have been easier for me to stay in my office and try to digest all that had transpired in my life before my arrival at Joyner Elementary. After all, my transition to this position was rapid. Considering the move to a new district and changes to the principal position (i.e., new teacher and leader evaluation system, state accountability measures, high-stakes testing) that had taken place while I was an assistant superintendent over the previous 5 years, it would have been easier to say, "No, thank you," to this extra activity—to this trip into the community. Instead, I emphatically said, "Yes!"

Figure 19. Mr. Rogers and Officer Clemmons Cool Their Feet Together in What Was a Dramatic Symbol of Tolerance and Unity (*Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, 1969).

By going into the community on this trip, I found my tribe. Consequently, my feelings associated with this vignette are *energized* and *joyful*. As we traveled from location to location, my sense of belonging continually grew. When we pulled into each neighborhood, we got off the bus, pulled out all of our goodies, and cranked up the music. At each stop, it was like a dance where two partners were getting to know each other. The first engagement was a little tentative and awkward as we got off the bus. After all, a bus full of mostly White folks were exiting the bus in these mostly Hispanic neighborhoods. Like dancers, however, as the familiarity of the rhythm of our interactions grew, our visit gained energy.

The faculty and staff of Joyner Elementary engaged the parents through a sometimes-halting, broken Spanish and English exchange. The children flitted about, interpreting, laughing, and playing. Likewise, the Joyner Elementary faculty and staff laughed and had a great time. When the time came to leave, we would pack up, tell the children that we would see them soon, thank the parents, and travel to our next location.

This vignette came before my first preplanning meeting. The teachers and paras on that trip had no idea that I had lived in trailers much like the ones that we visited when I was growing up. They had no idea that I had always wanted to do something like this neighborhood visit. I believe that everyone on this trip was better for having participated because they understood more about our families. They understood the poverty, the joy, the pride, and the determination that many of our children and families have when they show up to our school with smiles on their faces.

Sometimes, just one effort can bear much fruit. In many respects, I feel like this one thing—this trip—gave birth to many other ideas for community involvement at Joyner Elementary. This neighborhood visit is now an annual event. Additionally, this event spurred the

launch of our Holiday Block Party, our Dia De Los Muertos event, and the creation of our Community Involvement Committee.

Ethic of care.

"It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood" best exemplifies modeling, practicing, and confirmation of Noddings' Ethic of Care. The actual attempt to build relational capacity by going into our community showed that we were practicing care. This vignette pulls from the caring for the inner circle center of care. In that, Noddings stated the following regarding teachers:

> They must try to see the world as their students see it in order to move them from a less to a more satisfactory view. Good teachers do not reject what students see and feel, but rather work with what is presently seen and felt to build a stronger position for each student to do this effectively requires the creation and maintenance of a trusting relationship. (p. 107)

In this way, we stripped away any blinders that our faculty and staff might have had as to our students' daily lives and home environments. In venturing into our students' world, we were able to "see and feel" what our students experience on a daily basis. Without this practice, it would be very difficult to create the caring relationship that Noddings espouses. By saying "yes" to this experience, I was able to attempt to model and confirm the Ethic of care.

Ninety days are over. (Energized/Tentative*)*

Vignette. *Prologue:*

The sequence of events for planning an upcoming 2nd school year begins in earnest for me, the principal of Joyner Elementary. My experiences, plans and dreams are chronicled in this 3 Act play.

Act 1

Setting – February 26, 2018, Spring Leadership Retreat, Offsite location

Characters – me, 1 teacher leader from each grade level (6 total), special education teacher, assistant principal, instructional coaches (2), 1 ESOL team lead teacher, 1 intervention teacher, counselor, media specialist, 1 specials teacher representative

Me: Thank you all for agreeing to come to our Spring Retreat planning for next year. As a reminder, we are getting together for several reasons. We will discuss logistics of how we will plan and organize next year. In addition, we also discuss our wishes, dreams, and rationale for our decisions. We will reflect on what we have heard from our parents and students last week during the student and parent panel. We want to merge all of these things together so that as we consider practical applications for next year, we have a background on which to draw.

As a starter, we have been asked by the District to put together our master schedule and then to start building rosters.

All:[conversation about how early this seems]

Me: Yes! I know. It does seem early, but as I told you all at the very first pre-planning meeting, I would not make any changes for the first ninety days of school. Well, now is the time to make changes that we want. And, based on the district's prompting, we will make these decisions together.

All: [discussion commences based on the agenda – focused on relationships, culture and climate issues, what they heard from students and parents, the summary of the Mission and Vision statements and the master schedule]

Me: [after much discussion on the agenda and a lot of time spent on the master schedule] Okay, let's move on. As you all may know, I have a meeting next week at the district

office to discuss next year's personnel allotment. This is what I will present as far as our requests for next year. [pointing at projection]

	A	B	C	D
1	Grade	Students	Homerooms	Students per class
2	K	129	8	16.1
3	1	129	7	18.4
4	2	112	6	18.7
5	3	115	6	19.2
6	4	124	6	20.7
7	5	133	6	22.2
8		742	39	19.0
9				
10	Current			
11	Grade	Students	Homerooms	Students per class
12	K	129	7	18.4
13	1	129	7	18.4
14	2	112	6	18.7
15	3	115	5	23.0
16	4	124	5	24.8
17	5	133	5	26.6
18		742	35	21.2
19				

The bottom of the spreadsheet where it says current represents what I think we would be earn if I were sitting in the district office. Obviously, I am not in our central office, but this is my best guess at what they might say our earned allotment might be. The top represents what I am going to ask for as homeroom teachers. As you can see, this shows an increase of four teachers for us.

Now having sat in the seat last year where I was part of staffing conversations, I understand that the average salary and benefits associated with each teacher is somewhere around $80,000. So, in what I am proposing, we are asking for the district to spend an additional $320,000. Here is the kicker. Based on our reduced class sizes and our school performance as measured by Georgia Milestones, we will qualify for increased funding by classifying our classes as EIP [explains Georgia QBE funding].

The result of the increased revenue, means that we will be bringing in an extra $600,000. With that said, our district will earn an extra $200,000 plus dollars.

I will justify this request based on the conversations that I have had with you all. The message that I have heard is that we need more time to spend with our students. Based on what I am proposing, you will be able to do just that.

Teacher [generalized statement]: Wow! That is awesome! Be careful. They might pull you up to the central office if they see that you can do that.

Me: No worries! I am not going anywhere. We will see what they say. I have not gone through this process and I have no idea what they will think.

All:[continued work on logistics to end of the day]

Me: Wow! Great work, everyone. We have not finished covering our agenda. Based on where we are, we will need to reconvene if you are willing. And, since I have my allotment meeting this week, I will have more information when we get back together.

Act 2

Setting – March 6, 2018, district office

Characters – me, district personnel (4)

All: [meeting commences with a basic review of grade level enrollments]

District staff: Based on current projections, it looks like next year Joyner Elementary will remain the same as far as your staffing. Do you have any questions?

Me: [nervously opening a yellow file folder] Well…yes sir, I do have a question. I wonder if we could consider increasing our staffing for our homerooms? [pulling out a spreadsheet and handing it to each person in the room]

District staff: [saying nothing, giving each other sideways glances]

Me: [swallowing hard] I am asking for additional staffing to reduce my class sizes. Here is my rationale. Our data indicate that we are underperforming and I would like to be able to offer our teachers additional time to individualize their instruction. As a former assistant superintendent, I understand the associated costs. If my numbers are correct, I would guess that this would cost the district an extra $320,000 depending on years of service and degree level of the teacher. But here is the thing. I have calculated the additional revenues that we would bring in based on the fact that we would be able to use the EIP program funding. We would bring in about $600,000. With that said, we would offset the extra costs and still have provided additional money for the district.

District staff [generalized statements]: Wow! He knows his stuff.

District staff [generalized statement]: You have certainly done your work here. I am going to have to say no though. If I did this for your school, I would have to do it for everyone.

Me: I completely understand. I will do my best to use our existing resources to make the improvement we seek.

District staff [generalized statement]: [pointing to the allotment spreadsheet] Based on the current allotment, you have one teacher for every 14 students. Use the teachers that you have differently and still earn extra money for district.

Me: [gathering my papers and standing up to leave] Yes sir!

Act 3

Setting – March 8, 2018, Spring Leadership Retreat (day 2), Offsite location

Characters – me, 1 teacher leader from each grade level (6 total), special education teacher, assistant principal, instructional coaches (2), 1 ESOL team lead teacher, 1 intervention teacher, counselor, media specialist, 1 specials teacher representative

Me: Thank you all for agreeing to continue our Spring Retreat planning for next year. We will continue with our agenda. We did not answer all of our questions as far as logistics. And, I have information from my allotment meeting. First, let's discuss our logistics.

All: [work commences discussing schedules and initiatives]

Me: Okay guys let's come back together. We have made a lot of progress. Let's talk through what I learned at the allotment meeting. As of right now, there will be no change to the number of teachers that we earn.

Teacher [generalized statement]: Why?

Me: Before I answer, let me say that I completely understand the rationale. The explanation given to me was that if they did that for us, they would have to do that for everyone. And as a former district office person, I get it. They did challenge us to do things differently with our teachers to lower our numbers.

So here is where we are. We can leave things exactly as they are, which seems to be no one's preference. Or, we can use our personnel differently. This could mean that we push more homeroom teachers to lower grades and keep the same overall numbers. This would lower class sizes in our k through second grade classes, while pushing the third through fifth grade numbers higher [uncomfortable shifting of homeroom teachers]. Why don't you all discuss this and play with the numbers during lunch [teachers leave to go and get lunch].

Me: Coaches? Can we talk for a second? [pulling them aside during lunch] I have spoken with other principals about how they approached an innovative ESOL model. In this model, the homeroom teachers provide the ESOL services to their ELL students. What if we did that? It would decrease the fragmentation of our day, reduce class sizes, and remove the idea that someone else is responsible for ESOL services. After all, when the ESOL teacher leaves after she has pulled those ELL students and they go back into their class, they still remain ELL. If we focused on this as our schoolwide approach, wouldn't that be better?

ESOL Instructional Coach [generalized statement]: I love your thinking, but that is typically done on a small scale and we focus on using that model with only the students that have higher ACCESS scores.

Me: Can we call the district office to see if we can get permission?

Coaches and Me [generalized statement]: [on speaker phone with district office] We have spoken with other schools and would like to be able to use the innovative model for our ESOL instruction.

District office [generalized statement]: We typically only use that model with students who have higher composite Access scores.

Me: Yes. I understand, but we would be dramatically reducing our class size. This would allow us to focus on smaller group instruction. And, we have many teachers either in the ESOL certification endorsement classes or starting in the Spring. This will dramatically increase the number of teachers that are ESOL endorsed. After all, the superintendent instructed me to use our teachers differently.

District office [generalized statement]: You may move ahead.

All: [returning from lunch]

Me: Well, we have a new development. Before I start, I want to remind you that we have many teachers in our building who are ESOL endorsed and we have more that are enrolled in the program starting in the Spring.

So, here is the deal. We could potentially use our ESOL teachers in a homeroom setting. This would mean that homeroom teachers with the ESOL endorsement, would serve their students for that segment or segments. I would say right now that the teacher would not be responsible for the paperwork.

Here is how I see it. We are really an ESOL school! 85% of our school is Hispanic and of those students approximately 80% of them, or about 500 students are ESOL. Then consider that 95% of our school is considered impoverished. If you look at that and think that 95%, or that 700 of our 740 students need additional exposure to academic language, this is telling.

I have thought of this and wonder if you all have some of that same thoughts? How many of you have issues with your ESOL students coming and going, or being pulled aside in your class [hands from all homeroom teachers go up]? How many of you feel like your day is fragmented because you have to stop teaching when the ESOL teacher comes in to co-teach or to pull students out into the hallway [hands from all homeroom teachers go up]? How many of you think that our ESOL students who are pulled out into the hallway for instruction are distracted by noise and students going to the bathroom, specials, lunch or whatever [hands from all homeroom teachers go up]?

For those who struggled this year with the co-teaching model because you couldn't have common planning time, this eliminates that problem. And, I have a strong sense that it

would be better to teach an ESOL student as an ESOL student all day rather than for one or two segments [heads nodding in agreement].

Does anyone have thoughts on what I have said?

Teacher [generalized statement]: This makes sense to me. Our kids are always being pulled out of class and it ruins our flow.

Teacher [generalized statement]: Would we get training and support if we took on the ESOL services?

Me: This is exactly why we are meeting. If we go down this road, we would have to provide support. This support could be resources. More than likely, I would think that we need to make sure that there is enough planning time. We could address this through using our Title funds.

With all of that said, there is still an elephant in the room. Let's address it.

If we decide to do this, our ESOL teachers might be upset, reluctant, or both. They would be equally impacted by moving back into a classroom. We would need to support them too and make sure they can find success in this change.

Wow! We sure have gotten a lot done. There is a lot of work to do. I will have to put together a plan of who will be where and what the numbers would look like in our new configuration. I will try to get this work done prior to Spring Break so that everyone knows the plan and placement for next year. Thank you all.

Reflection.

This vignette is very important to my CRSJL journey. "Ninety days are over" covers three events: (a) my spring leadership retreat that occurred during my first year at Joyner

Elementary, (b) my first allotment meeting, and (c) my follow-up meeting to finalize our direction for year two after I learned of the school's allotment.

In preparing for my second year at Joyner Elementary, I wanted to get feedback as to how we would organize our year, resources, and structure. I prepared for the spring retreat like I would prepare for any other meeting. I had an agenda. I was ready to go. The front-end prep work required a significant amount of time.

The meeting was very productive as we discussed and settled on a master schedule. I shared my intent and rationale for requesting additional staffing for our homerooms. Yet, in the end, we were not able to cover the entire agenda. We agreed that we would meet again to finalize our plans after I attended my allotment meeting.

I walked into the district meeting prepared with a spreadsheet that showed exactly what I wanted to do to meet the needs of our students with what I viewed as required personnel. The work that I did was built on the idea of reducing classes. My rationale and talking point for the people in the room was that, with reduced class sizes, our school could focus more on the needs of our individual students. I argued that our results, as measured by the state end-of-grade tests, indicated that we were not performing well.

While I knew that the cost of additional teachers would be concerning, I was able to deflect that concern by asserting that even with the increased personnel costs, we would be able to earn more revenue than what I was asking for (i.e., the additional costs associated with my approach). I called upon my prior knowledge as assistant superintendent of finance and operations. I knew that the funding mechanism in the state of Georgia would provide more funding per student for the early intervention program (EIP).

In Georgia's QBE funding, EIP classification earns additional funding for each student so that reduced class size costs can be offset by increased funding (GDOE, 2017b). A student must be qualified for the EIP program based on academic performance. I knew going into this meeting that many students would be categorized automatically as early intervention students based on high-stakes testing data.

That said, I walked into this meeting knowing that with the increased number of teachers, we could reduce class sizes, and the cost of the additional teachers would be offset by the increased earnings. In fact, I positioned this result as a win for the district because the district would gain an extra $200,000 in revenues based on the approach.

My superintendent and others in the room applauded my work, but then they quickly shot me down. The superintendent made the argument that if he did it for one, he would have to do it for all. I indicated that I understood. As I left, he challenged me to take the teachers that I have and staff differently with them, thus helping the students and the district at the same time. I accepted his challenge, and I graciously walked out of that meeting knowing that I tried but had not received exactly what I had sought. Instead of additional help, I was given a challenge. As it turns out, the challenge pointed me more towards the CRSJL practice of improving school structures.

The superintendent's challenge to me (i.e., to use our staff in a different way to help our students) was really a one-shot option. The only significant way that I could think of to solve the problem was to approach our English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services differently. During my first year, Joyner Elementary had 8 ESOL teachers compared to the 34 kindergarten through fifth grade homeroom teachers. Our ESOL teachers represented 25% of our

teaching staff. Since the school would not be gaining any additional staffing, we would still have that very large ESOL teacher group again for my second year as principal.

I settled on putting this fact into play as a way to change the way that we approached our ELL students and to reduce our classroom sizes. The only way that I could do this would be to use an innovative ESOL model. In conversations with other principals, I learned that they had also faced this issue and utilized an ESOL model to use homeroom teachers to provide services. Quietly, I worked through this potential route to see if it would work. As I worked through the possibility, I began to get excited because the innovative ESOL instructional model could, indeed, accomplish our objective.

Yet, I hesitated. I was worried because I wasn't sure what the district would say. I also knew that this model would impact the ESOL teachers who would be pushed into a homeroom—not something that most would openly embrace. Additionally, some grade levels had more ESOL-endorsed teachers than others, so I would have to move teachers from one grade level to another. This would cause anxiety. Lastly, I wondered if I was making a mistake. Nevertheless, I proceeded to begin implementing the model.

I knew that to generate any buy-in for the changes I was proposing, I would have to position my conversation with faculty and staff in the proper light. The teachers would have to own part of the decision, and I would have to sell this as a win-win. I did sell it in this way, but I also owned the potential negative impacts. I was passionate about my desire to refocus our ESOL instructional model. I shared that I wanted Joyner Elementary to treat our dominant ELL student population as language learners throughout the day and not just provide some separate, disjointed services.

The move to the innovative ESOL instructional model was possible because out of 80% of Joyner Elementary homeroom teachers held or were working toward an ESOL endorsement. My rationale as this vignette unfolded continued to crystallize around the precepts of CRSJL. Most certainly, this story aligns with the research of Theoharis and O'Toole (2011), who studied SJL through the lens of an inclusive ELL approach. It was only after writing this vignette that I read their research that touted SJL through an inclusive ELL approach via either a co-taught model or a sole-responsibility homeroom model (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Without the prior research, my efforts made sense. With the research, however, I felt validated. As a CRSJL, my efforts in pushing our school towards an innovative ESOL model organized a structure that was centered on our students within an inclusive environment that would improve their opportunities for success.

The adjectives *energized* and *tentative* emerged with multiple readings and reflections as I considered this vignette. Initially, this vignette was broken into three separate stories, but when I read them again, I was compelled to merge them. To share each act separately would have resulted in a disjointed theme. Taken together, Acts One, Two, and Three collectively share my leadership thinking in the journey to inclusive ELL instruction. Throughout my readings, I kept reflecting on my energy and tentativeness. I am a dreamer, and the ideas of changing a structure that I believed to be disenfranchising (i.e., segregated ESOL services via a pull-out model) and offering our students and teachers an opportunity to embrace this change exhilarated me. In short, doing what is right got my juices flowing; yet, I was tentative, and I still remain so.

The title of this vignette, "Ninety days are over," was derived from my first meeting at Joyner Elementary. I proclaimed that I would not come into the school and flip everything upside down; rather, I promised to take 90 days to observe and ask questions before we (i.e., the

teachers, staff, and I) collectively made decisions to change. Upon reflection, I changed things too quickly in my first principalship experience at Smoke Rise Elementary. With that said, I shared that I would not repeat those same mistakes at Joyner, yet I also said that I would reserve the right to make changes should I find it necessary.

It is important to note that I did make one major change with our ESOL approach during that first preplanning week at Joyner Elementary. For the most part, each ESOL teacher was dedicated to an entire grade level and served one class at a time because of our high density of ELL students. In this model, the ESOL teacher would pull the students out into the hallway or an empty room. I asked the question, "If we are pulling the students from ESOL services all from the same class at the same time, why don't we push in to the class to co-teach?" This made sense to me, and I proposed that we change the model from a pull-out to a push-in, co-taught model.

I approached the change in the ESOL instructional model tentatively because I was new to the school and making this change ran counter to what I had said earlier. In this tentativeness, I made a qualifying statement that also allowed teachers to use their judgment to pull kids out as they thought was prudent. During that first year, most of the classes were co-taught. We had professional learning around co-teaching models, but it was not enough. The model was improved, but the effectiveness of the co-teaching pairs varied wildly throughout the building. Then, as the year progressed, and leading up to the time of this vignette, I felt like I was walking on eggshells with the staff and the district office. I was trying to balance changing an ESOL instructional structure while assessing, changing, and establishing a new culture and climate in the building. Then, I felt like I had to absorb the ESOL instructional mandates, guidance, and direction from the district office.

Taking an existing ESOL instructional structure within my first year and changing it twice gave me great pause. After all, I was not sure that I was doing the right thing, and making these changes really upset the apple cart. Frankly, the problem—and the elephant in the room that I addressed in faculty meetings—was that non-homeroom teachers (i.e., the ESOL teachers) did not have some of the responsibilities of the homeroom teachers. Coupled with the challenge from the superintendent and the district office telling me about the things that I could not do in order to move to the innovative model, this was exhausting. The work to build this structure was immense, and the potential of it not working, being overturned, or destroying morale was a significant reason for my tentativeness.

In reflection, I wish that I had been more explicit about the exclusionary practices of pulling our ESOL students out of the class to teach them. Instead, I relied on a positive, "It's good for the teachers," logical model of reasoning. I reasoned that, instructionally, two teachers were better than one, and I also rationalized that two teachers working together could have fun and find reward in bouncing ideas off each another in the co-taught class setting. I should have been more student-focused in my proclamations. Yet, I wonder: If two CRSJL travelers depart for the same destination and wind up in the same place, is one a better CRSJL because that path was tougher to travel? In this answer, I will not beat myself up.

Ethic of care.

Noddings (2015) stated, "But if the school has one main goal, a goal that guides the establishment and priority of all others, it should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people" (p. 10). My efforts in showing care throughout this vignette align best with modeling. I placed the priority in this vignette on providing our teachers and students what I viewed as the best chance to grow as healthy, competent, and moral people. The emphases

during the meetings documented in the vignette were to reduce class size, to provide a more inclusive ESOL model, and to defragment the day.

In this vignette, care of ideas as a center of care, caring and continuity, caring for ideas and caring for the inner circle (Noddings, 2015). There is a connection in this vignette with the approach to inclusive ESOL teaching and Noddings' care of ideas. Noddings (2015) stated, "Pedagogy should begin with the purposes, interests, and capacities of students" (p. 150). In this way, our change of ESOL instruction was based on Noddings' argument. The consideration of change started with pedagogy. Noddings also noted that smaller class size could help, stating, "The assumption of such understanding often masks reliance on stereotypes. Children come from cultures, but they are also special individuals each in need of a particular relation with his or her teacher" (p. 107). I felt very strongly in my justification for pursuing the changes at the time of the study, and—with additional time, space, and knowledge—I am settled firmly in resolute acceptance that sometimes, pursuing what matters is painful.

Are We at a Fiesta? (Energized/Joyful)

> **Vignette.** *Setting – December 26, 2018, 2nd Annual Holiday Block Party, Offsite location*
>
> *Characters – me, teacher, other teacher and Director from District Office, 700+ students, parents, and volunteers*
>
> *Me: [yelling over the DJ music to teacher]: Wow! This block party is so much better than last year's! Thank you for all of your work. This is awesome.*
>
> *Teacher [generalized statement] Yes. Look at all these people. I can't believe it.*
>
> *Me: [pointing to raised DJ stand] Look at that DJ stand. That thing is humongous and I love the music and the lights. It's like we are at a concert. I had no idea it would be this way.*

Other Teacher [generalized statement]: Well I was just going to tell you that I just received a complaint about the music.

Me: Really? Why?

Other teacher [generalized statement]: It was an American family and they were complaining that it's all Spanish music. They didn't think this was going to be a fiesta.

Me: [sarcastic tone and irritation] Really? No one forced anyone to be here. I guess if they do not want free food, smores, or an opportunity to win gift cards or a Chromebook, they could go home. [other teacher shrugs shoulders and walks away]

Director from District Office: [approaches me]

Me: Thank you so much for coming. This is so awesome, isn't it?

Director from District Office [generalized statement]: Yes, this is amazing. I cannot believe all of these people here.

Me: Well, I just got a complaint that we are playing too much Spanish music.

Director from District Office [generalized statement]: Well as I see it, [looking around] looking at the faces here, I would say that the music is appropriate.

Me: [relieved] I thought so too.

Reflection.

This event took place on the teacher workday right before Winter Break and represented our second annual Joyner Elementary School Holiday Block Party. While the first block party was great, the second one probably tripled the number of people who attended. There were many hours of planning required to create and put on this event, and to be able to afford this, we had to approach many sponsors to help us with funding. In addition, we put on a food drive so that we could go out into our community and deliver food and presents for our children before the party

in the evening. The party was located at one of the churches in the community, and transportation was provided to help our families attend. During our Block Party, there were giveaways, music, free food, and student performances.

The title for this vignette came from the interaction between a Joyner Elementary teacher and a White parent. I chose "Are we at a fiesta?" as a tongue-in-cheek reflection. To answer the question directly, the answer is clearly "yes" because *fiesta* is the Spanish word for party. There is almost a defiant nature to the title. At Joyner Elementary, there is a clear Hispanic majority. To hear the question in a negative light was not was I expected. In naming this vignette, however, I call out the absurdity of the question. The title and the placement of this vignette is close to the last in the series and shifts the reader to the idea that hegemonic, White-centric practices are being investigated.

I had hoped that this event would be better (i.e., more culturally appropriate, more efficient, and better-attended) than it was the prior year. All of these things came true. On the surface, it looked like a party; however, digging deeper and looking through the lens of CRSJL, the block party was so successful because it was based on professional learning, community involvement, and cultural responsiveness—not by happenstance. While the nature of this vignette speaks of the party, there were many deliberate actions leading up to the block party during my second year at Joyner Elementary.

During my second year, we had multiple funding sources for in-day professional learning (PL). This PL has focused on instruction through the lens of language and culture throughout the year. Through the learner profile, there has been an emphasis that to care for our students and help them learn, we must know our learners. The door to culture has been slung wide open. Through this learning, we have been able to honor our cultures because we know our students

better. This knowledge was evident in the events, music and food that evening. We had tamales, *atole* (i.e., a Mexican version of hot chocolate), piñatas, and Latin music. This in-depth look has formed around a learner profile, shown in Figure 20.

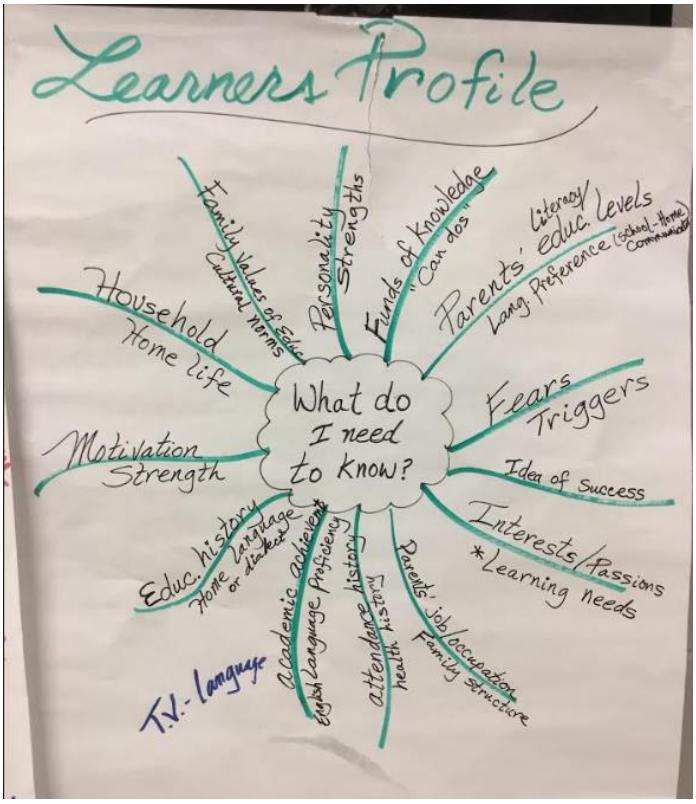

Figure 20. Learner Profile – What Do I Need To Know (About My Learners)? (2018)

In terms of community involvement, our first Block Party involved just a portion of the school. For the second Block Party, almost everyone from the school was involved. We had a crew of teachers who came in to work with the parent-teacher organization (PTO) to make tamales; the parents had to show our teachers how to make the tamales. This was an example of CRSJL related to cultural responsiveness and inclusion. Traditionally, our Joyner PTO has worked in isolation from the faculty and staff. My decision to merge efforts was deliberate and

focused on closing the gap between our families and the school. After all, we had 2,000 tamales to make, and our PTO moms needed help. In this setting, the instructional tables were turned when parents taught the teachers how to make the tamales. This role reversal included instances when the teachers made mistakes and did not understand what the parents were saying in Spanish.

Once that morning crew was done, they—along with the afternoon crew—went out into the community to deliver 140 boxes of food. Each box contained enough food for three days, and as an added treat, there were two wrapped presents. After all boxes were delivered, the afternoon crew went to the church to set up the event.

While my feelings in the vignette would reflect a level of irritation, after I reread and reflected on this vignette, I became happier with the outcome. Our school is demographically comprised of a majority of Hispanics. As I stood there, marveling at how wonderful this event was, I recalled that question that was posed to me; the recollection struck me, and caused me to pause. I did not feel like I had done anything wrong, but I wasn't quite sure how to respond. In response, however, my director had allayed my fears that I was doing something wrong.

My feelings during this particular event were energized and joyful. I was so over-the-top happy based on just how culturally responsive we were. From the tamale making to the deliveries into the community to the representation of our children’s culture that night, I couldn’t be happier in my reflection. My energy comes from the logistical efficiency and interconnectedness that we were able to create between PL and action. Positive outcomes beget energy for me.

Ethic of care.

In this vignette, the ethic of care best utilized modeling and practicing. In the modeling aspect, I was able to pursue and model the care for our teachers through PL. This model served as an open door to conversations about race, culture, and care. We discussed many elements of what care looks like in a classroom with a caring teacher, and this work centered around building a learner profile that honors our students' background. Noddings stated, "Indeed, if we are to be prepared to care for those we encounter, we must give some respectful attention to the social customs and principles they accept" (p. 100). Practicing care was evident that night through my actions in working and interacting with our parents, teachers, and students. Noddings' caring for the inner circle and care for strangers align with my efforts to establish caring in this vignette. Noddings (2015) stated, "One purpose of global education and multicultural education is to supply students with knowledge of other people and their customs" (p. 113).

Trauma collides at race, poverty, and deportation. (Sad/fearful)

Vignette. ***Act 1*** **-**

Setting: Second year as Principal at Joyner Elementary School, Principal's office

Characters: Father of fourth-grade girl, Hispanic fourth-grade boy (alleged bully), fourth grade teachers, principal

A parent came in and asked to speak with me this morning before I was able to go down to the cafeteria for my morning duty. Interestingly, he is the first Black male parent that I have ever sat with in my office either as the first-time principal at Smoke Rise Elementary, as Assistant Superintendent or in my current role.

He made the claim that his daughter was being bullied, called fat and stupid. I asked the typical questions to try to narrow down who the bully might be, as the father did not

know the bully's name. I shared that I would take every step to investigate and ensure that his daughter had a good experience in our school.

After the father left, I met with the alleged victim, a fourth-grade Black girl. In conversation, I was able to determine the identity of the bully, a young man in the same grade level. She stated that the boy was calling her names like stupid and fat at recess. As an educator, I always try to model the ability to have a conversation with another person to express any dissatisfaction that I might have. It was no different with this young lady. I asked her whether she had spoken to the young man and shared the fact that she did not like his comments. She indicated that she had and that the young man said, "I don't care." I also asked her if she had spoken to the teacher. She said that she had but that the teacher had not done anything to this point. I assured the young lady that I would follow up and have a conversation with the teacher.

From there, a faculty member who knows the young lady came into my office. When I shared the name of the young man, the alleged bully, to inquire about his background, everything came into focus. The intersection of trauma, race and deportation all occurred in my office that morning as this teacher shared that the Hispanic boy has been dealing with the deportation of his mother all year. He has, at times, sat in the car at the front of the school and refused to come in because he has shared that he is so worried about his mother that he can't do anything else. I thanked the teacher for sharing with me.

After this conversation with the faculty member in my office, I went down to the teacher's room to talk about what had transpired with these students to see what the teacher did in response to this situation. In checking further, I learned that the young man was not in class and had since left to go to Mexico to be with his mother.

Act 2 -

Setting: Second year as Principal at Joyner Elementary School, Principal's office

Characters: counselor and principal

Upon my return to my office, I invited the counselor to my office to have a conversation about this issue. I slumped in my chair and shared the procession of events over the morning. The counselor added insight to both of the students involved in this issue because she had knowledge of both of their situations really well. We discussed the challenges of our students dealing with pain.

More important, our discussion veered towards the fact that our focus on SEL, and specifically her efforts as the leader of the Choose Love Committee, are critical to helping our students cope with their circumstances. We shared a pretty lengthy conversation and I thanked her for taking the charge in our school and that our teachers are in a much better place to care for their students because of her work.

Reflection.

This vignette takes place in the second year of my second stint as principal. It came at a time when I was contemplating the trauma associated with the 95% poverty of our school and living in a country where there is a growing sentiment of nationalism that is openly touting shutting our border and deporting illegals. Then, I really pondered this question: What is the level of resilience amongst our poor Hispanic and Black population? Do they have the skills to rise out of the circumstances that they are in? If not, do we as a faculty and staff understand the intersection of need and instructional opportunity?

The collision of circumstances in this particular instance hit me like a ton of bricks. It was clear to me that the so-called bully was striking out at the world. While I am not a trained

counselor, my knowledge and experience would lead me to conclude that the young man is hurting. He is longing for his mother. As a result, he tried to displace his hurt on someone else. For him, the easiest target was that young lady on the playground.

More telling in this narrative was the desperate need of my school, in particular, to continue our focus on addressing the social and emotional needs of our children. If our children do not know how to speak of their hurt, it will manifest itself in other ways. As Hartling and Lindner (2016) noted, children in hurt will use strategies of survival and disconnection, and this could include hiding or becoming aggressive or overly passive as they deal with that pain. Our faculty and staff can help children as we conduct our morning meetings. This effort began in earnest during the second school year of my tenure.

Through conversation at our summer retreat after my first year at Joyner Elementary, we discussed the social and emotional needs of our school and also discussed distributed leadership. As I told the Joyner Elementary staff on the first day of preplanning, "I own no decisions, but I own all decisions." While this seems impossible through a study of logic, I explained the comment in this way: Ultimately, the buck will always stop with me. I am the principal. I shared that the intent of my statement was that I would invite others to share in the mission, vision, and leadership decision-making that I would pursue. In other words, I would seek input, listen, and consider as many collective possibilities as I could before I made a decision for our school. The intent of the retreat was to build our mission and vision and to plan a unified approach to how we would approach our diverse population.

Leading into my second year at Joyner Elementary, and during the summer retreat and our subsequent preplanning, we formed a committee to address the social-emotional needs of our students. The committee, called "Choose Love," is comprised of the school counselor as the

leader along with teacher committee members. The committee meets regularly and discusses progress towards meeting our students' social and emotional learning (SEL) needs. They discuss the implementation status of morning meetings and issues that they are seeing in their classes with student behaviors and emotions.

With all of this information as context, this vignette involved every potential layer of Joyner Elementary School and beyond. The students, parents, teachers, committee, whole school, community, and nation are all implicated in this complex layering of circumstance and experience. While the vignette only captures the interactions of a few (i.e., the students, the parent, the counselor, and me), the explanation of the background creates the coloring through which I experienced this story.

My attempts at CRSJL in the "Trauma collides at race, poverty, and deportation" vignette are less obvious at a whole school level in this story; yet, the effort is there. Throughout my first year and at our retreat, Joyner Elementary faculty and staff identified SEL needs as a very important element to focus on every day. As the leader in the building, I had to foster that issue as an important consideration. It would have been easy for me to discount the relational needs of our students. Based on the mandates—real or self-imposed—from those above me, I could have made the statements, "We do not have enough time for morning meetings. We need to teach our students to read and write. And, we do not have a second to waste." As a CRSJL, however, I made the statement implicitly and explicitly that we would consider these SEL needs as important. We carved out time and created a committee to support the efforts. While I did not mandate that every teacher must teach the same morning meeting curriculum, I facilitated the building of the foundation with the teachers who were most interested in going down this road. I did this via the creation of a master schedule with a built-in, designated morning meeting.

Additionally, the Choose Love Committee explicitly discussed the students' SEL needs within our school.

Within this vignette, the explicit nature of my CRSJL attempts were more individualized. In my conversation with the counselor, we discussed, reflected, and lamented on the circumstance of these two seemingly independent issues colliding around SEL. Our conversation about this issue was wide-ranging; we discussed the trauma associated with deportation, and then we talked about the nature of poverty. Ultimately, as the leader of the Choose Love Committee, I sought to reinforce the counselor's efforts. Without continued focus, we both agreed that these sorts of issues would not abate. As a CRSJL, it is critical that I shine the light on issues that are inherent, pervasive, and inequitable. In this instance, the conversation expressed recognition of circumstances for both students (i.e., the "bully" and the "bullied") and a continued approach that would enable our school to address and potentially rectify issues.

I felt of *sad* and *fearful* as I reflected on this vignette. I reflected a dark mood as I approached this experience. Starting with fearful, I settle on these reasons for fear. I am so fearful that I am less than capable of making the change necessary to help our teachers see the importance of addressing the SEL needs of our students. I am fearful that our teachers will not listen or care about what I say because they are overwhelmed with teaching the standards or worse still; they are indifferent. I am also fearful that our children's' lived experience resets our efforts every night when they go home. In this reset, are the social emotional coping mechanisms that we teach every day wiped out by racism, poverty and violence?

I am also fearful that the reader will view my efforts as not enough. Will my efforts be judged as infantile, idealistic and that of a bleeding-heart liberal? Will this judgment will keep me from getting my next job? I am also fearful our legislators will seek to levy more punishment,

via laws, on the bully, rather than focusing on the SEL training that our teachers need so that we can help our students cope with the issues that they face.

Fear gives way to sadness in this vignette. I have such sorrow for our students living in these situations. This sadness grabs a hold of me and does not let go at times. And perhaps, my experience as a student that lived on the margins, makes me more reactive to these cases. Ultimately, I am sad that the young girl feels less than and hurts because of what another student says to her. And then, I am so sad to think that the young man who is striking out against this girl, might be doing so because he is angry and sad that he can not be with his deported mother.

With my sadness and fear, there is a realization that I cannot dwell there. After all, inertia keeps things either moving or not. If I fail as a leader to affect change as a CRSJL, then I will contribute to the continued approach that does very little to help my students. At the same time, I must continue to seek the joy of my job, because the weight of an interaction like the one in this vignette exacts a heavy emotional and physical toll that will most certainly lead to burn out.

Ethic of care.

In this case both confirmation, modeling and dialogue were in evidence. The modeling of an ethic of care was done at a whole school level as we discussed the setting of our mission, vision and our committees. This effort to lead to establish caring relationships was clearly stated as the intent and as Noddings notes, we must care deeply with parental interests (Noddings, 2015). The conversation with the counselor provided an example of both dialogue and confirmation. Caring for strangers was the center of care that I would say best fit this vignette because, we spent a lot of time discussing the circumstances around student poverty and deportation. Noddings stated, “In schools we more often preach than teach in the areas of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender” (p. 120). In this way, dialogue is called as a need to move beyond

preaching. I was able to point to our Choose Love Committee that she is leading. The committee is focused on the SEL needs of our students. I confirmed the connection between our committee and the explicit caring needs that were evident in this particular instance. Even with my assertions, my feeling in reflecting on this vignette was that my efforts were limited.

Children are not red or blue. (Contentious/Frustrated)

Vignette. Part 1 - Meeting

Date – February 19, 2018 - Teacher workday

Setting –Media Center (room set-up for a panel discussion– teachers all facing the front, with 14 chairs and stools facing the teachers)

Characters: Me as the moderator, Spanish-speaking translator, Faculty and staff of Joyner Elementary School, 14-member parent and student panel (comprised on 11 Hispanics & 3 African Americans)

Me (facing panel): I would like to welcome and thank all of you for agreeing to join us today. We have some questions that we would love your insight into as we seek to better understand our families and students. We would like to hear what you think about our school and community. Please know that we want to hear what you like and don't like. We want to understand what you are afraid of, both from a student and parent perspective. We will keep this information for us and us only. We will not share it with any authorities. We know this might be a little uncomfortable, but we would like to hear everything that you have to say. (translation into Spanish followed every response)

Me: Now let's get started. Students, this question is for you. What do you like about our school?

Student panelists (generalized responses): We love our teachers, art, music and experiences. We like having choices, science and recess. We like that our teachers care about us.

Me: Okay. Thank you so much everyone. Students, I have one more question for you. And, don't worry. You will not hurt my feelings or anyone else's when you answer. Please try to be as honest as possible. Here is the question! What is one thing that you would like for us to improve, or make better, in our school?

Student panelists (generalized responses): We do not like the bus. We would also like better food and cleaner bathrooms.

Me. Thank you so much for your honesty and bravery in answering.

Me: Okay, parents…your turn! You have heard your children answer the questions. We know that it is very scary to sit in front of all of these adults (kids nodding in agreement) and tell us what they do not like about our school. With that said, we are going to ask you to clarify any of their responses, plus share your own.

Are there any additional thoughts that you would like to share that perhaps your children really like or dislike about our school?

Parent panelists (generalized response) – No. Our children shared the same things with you that they tell us at home.

Me: Okay. We will take everything that they said into account as we try to keep doing the things they like. And, we will also work on the things that we need to improve.

Parents, now we are going to ask you your thoughts now. What is the biggest thing you want us to know?

Parent panelists (generalized response) – We want to come into the school and volunteer, but we are not sure how to do that. Some of us speak mostly Spanish. We also do not have transportation to come to school. We enjoy when we are invited in for events and would like more performances. We appreciate that you know and love our children. We also want you to know us.

Me: Wow! Thank you so much for sharing. We will take all of these things into consideration as we move towards building our plans for upcoming years.

Okay. Now we are going a little deeper. What is the one thing that you are most fearful in our community or school?

Parent panelists (generalized responses) – We have a fear of being deported. When we leave our home for work, we are not sure that we will be picked up by ICE. We also worry about our children. They really worry about us when we leave the house. We were upset because last year during the election there were some teachers that openly talked about the new president. Our people are fearful of what the president says and we do not like that teachers were talking to students about supporting him. Our children came home upset about that.

Me: I am sorry that this was your experience. Please know that our mission is not to share political viewpoints with your children. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Parent panelists (generalized responses) – Yes. We are also scared for our children's safety when they come to school. We worry about all of the school shootings. We also do not like the buses.

Me: Thank you all for sharing. We really appreciate your time and your thoughts. As I mentioned earlier, our goal is to take all of the things that are good and make them better. For our areas of improvement, we make a promise today to take your thoughts and fears, and to get better. Again…thank you (panelists leave).

Me: Okay everyone! Please take some time to reflect and answer the questions about what you just heard. We will continue to build towards our shared mission and vision and what we just experienced might prove insightful.

Vignette. Part 2 - Blog

Blog post 1/5/19 - For my entire adult life, I have maintained a conservative stance. My voting history would be mostly conservative. But I have never voted just for a party. I vote with my conscience. I think. I reflect. Then, I make the best decision that I can. This is the preface to this blog.

Now, I am willing to stand up and say what I feel in the face of what may be damning criticism.

My dissertation is about culturally responsive social justice leadership through a Caring Theory lens. All of that mumbo jumbo essentially boils down to doing what is right for the least of these. Yes. I went all biblical there.

For our school, the demographics are 85% Hispanic, with many 1st generation American students. Our poverty rate sits at ~94%. Most of our Hispanic students spoke Spanish first in their homes and are engaged in the challenge to learn English at school. A lot of my parents do not speak English!

Our families are struggling to find their way in our beautiful country. To fail to discuss that would be a travesty. These parents have risked everything to be in this country. Yes, some are illegal and feel the pressure of our country's current political climate. Deportation is a very real threat that our children worry about every single day. Parents in our school have been, or are in the process of being deported. And, more startlingly, we have a president who has threatened to take away the United States birthright citizenship of our students. This would apply to a huge majority of our school's children. This is where I have stand up.

I do believe in border security. And, I believe in the American Dream, the pursuit of happiness and freedom.

Ultimately, I believe in our children. Our country needs to figure this out. I see my school families busting their butts to make ends meet. They are working many of the jobs that our native English speakers would not or do not find palatable.

I have been in a chicken plant. I have seen where the live chickens enter the building into a dimly lit room. These chickens are caught and hung upside down by their legs. This begins the journey to processing the chicken that we eat. Yet, to see it, smell it and experience it, makes one pause. The chickens move along a conveyor that runs them through machines that stretches and then cuts their necks, plucks their feathers, guts them, and cleans the birds. From there, these naked, whole birds enter a very large room where scores of people cut and process them into whatever the customer has ordered; halves, leg quarters, breasts, etc. Do you know who I saw working there? The majority of the employees were mostly non-White immigrants. Most were Hispanic, followed by African immigrants and rounding out the workforce were a few White workers.

I would not want to work this job. It was smelly, damp, cold and chickens were slaughtered by the thousands. This experience made me ponder my food choices.

Yet, this is where many of my school families work. Some have managed to purchase "papers" that allow them to work and perhaps some companies might hire those that have entered our country illegally. And then, there are probably others that are in this country legally.

We have a current political climate that is toxic. We have a president who wants to build the Wall to keep out the illegal aliens, terrorists, drug runners, gangs, murderers and rapists. To denigrate, call names, fear monger and demonize the people trying to get into our country with rhetoric is reprehensible. Instead, we ought to recognize the human cost that our immigrants are facing to come to our country. And yes, we also need to identify the costs of not dealing with this issue for our legally-here taxpayers. We have to manage the issue with both border security solutions AND a solidly built immigration policy.

Our parents are not faceless aliens. They have names. They have children. And these children come to the school where I work.

And...

I...

LOVE

them!

Civility, conversation and compromise ought to rule the day.

Because after all...our children are not red or blue.

Reflection.

"Children are not red or blue" is comprised of two sources yet is a combination of ongoing thoughts and feelings that I have had over the span of time since I started working at Joyner Elementary. The first section of the vignette is written in a performance format with the second section being taken from my blog. Both portions represent my efforts to be a CRSJL. The title of this vignette is representative of the rhetoric associated with our Hispanic children being caught in an unfair game of tug-of-war between the red Republican and blue Democrat. The title basically states that children should not be included in a political back-and-forth.

When I assumed the role of principal in my new school, President Trump had been in office for half a year. The President touted bolstered border security as one of his campaign promises. He used rhetoric of building "the Wall" to keep our country safe from the hordes of illegal aliens, terrorists, and murderers. The use of this language runs counter to my values and beliefs. When I took the position as principal in a vastly Hispanic-populated school, I knew going in that the political climate could potentially be an issue that I might face. I was more on target than I would have ever imagined.

Within my first year at Joyner, I faced many challenges. Some were the garden variety issues that every new administrator faces in a new position. I had to determine culture, climate, academic focus, and how the faculty and staff worked. I also had to learn about my community, students, and families. As I dug in to learn about my faculty and staff, I learned that some of the adults and students had openly championed the election of President Trump. I was appalled at learning this.

At our teacher workday, the student and parent panel came at a time when I wanted our school to get to know our families better. I also wanted to set the stage for a mission- and vision-

building faculty and staff summer retreat. Yet, there was something unspoken that I also wanted. As an administrator, there are times when I tell everyone what I am doing and why I am doing it. This was not the case in this instance. I positioned this meeting as a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our students and families. What I also hoped was that our parents would share their thoughts about the political climate in our school, community, and country. I wanted our faculty and staff to gain the cultural perspective of our parents as the context within which some of our teachers were sharing a political slant that was potentially counter to what our families felt. As it turned out, my plan was successful during the panel discussion. The experience exposed the faculty and staff of Joyner Elementary to a culturally responsive environment.

The second portion of "Children are not red or blue" comes from my blog. This blog represents the intersection of four factors: (a) the current political climate, (b) my tour of a chicken plant while working at Smoke Rise Elementary, (c) a year and a half of my experiences at Joyner Elementary, and (d) the research that I have read around CRSJL. Ultimately, the blog positions me in an assertive, searching, and advocate perspective. My assertion is that I will no longer remain silent despite potential blowback. I also suggest that solutions are out there and advocate for solution-seeking rather than denigrating the faceless illegal alien.

After rereading and reflecting on "Children are not red or blue," I settled on the adjectives *contentious* and *frustrated*. As I drive to work, I often wonder about how I, the White man, can be an antipolitical being. That is, I seek to avoid controversy in my school; yet, as many have stated, a CRSJL can be filled with stress as the leader addresses injustice and marginalization (Brown, 2004; Delpit, 2012; DeMatthews, 2018; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007, 2009; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011; Theoharis &

O'Toole, 2011). With that foundation, I found that in both parts of the vignette, I confronted the political climate surrounding many of our families.

In our student and teacher panel, my confrontation of the issues of immigration, citizenship, and political climate was indirect. Via my questioning of our panelists, I was able to coax their thoughts about how some teachers at Joyner Elementary shared their thoughts about then-candidate (and, later, President-elect) Trump. Despite my efforts to minimize any tension with the panelists, it was clear from their experience and feelings that they were not happy with our teachers who had shared their feelings about President Trump. In my blog and through the CRSJL practice of critical self-awareness and reflection, I utilized words that placed my feelings towards our political climate in a negative light with words that would be associated with displeasure. Words from my blog included: travesty, reprehensible, denigrate, fear-monger, demonize, and reprehensible; these reflect the contextual flavor that I used to share my feelings. To say something this open and honest in a very public forum was very frightening. With that said, the decision to write something that was seen and read by many was tension-filled, and it was not something that I was sure that I could or should do.

As I started in my new role at Joyner Elementary, I knew—based on my first experience at Smoke Rise Elementary—that it would behoove me to minimize the change process on the front end of my tenure. Instead, I sought to understand the culture, the personnel, and the community. As a result, this vignette represents the CRSJL practice of engaging the community. In this knowledge-seeking time, I was most frustrated when I learned that our teachers had openly celebrated the election of President Trump in front of our predominantly Hispanic student population. This struck a nerve with me and frustrated me for two major reasons. First, if teachers lack awareness of how our students and their parents might feel about a presidential

candidate who is promoting a wall to keep them out, I question the empathic capacity of those teachers. If they know that this issue might hurt students' and parents' feelings or scare them, the teachers should not say anything! Secondly, and most importantly, if our faculty and staff do understand the potential impact of the President on our families, then why stay at Joyner Elementary? Why not go somewhere else?

In reflection, this vignette confirms the political nature of the CRSJL. In particular, Joyner Elementary is a school that is directly impacted by the political climate; the very large immigrant population is hearing the clamoring to build a wall. The challenges are clear, especially considering that President Trump garnered a very large majority of the vote in the school district during the election. This support was made evident during my first year. When addressing this via a student and parent panel, I was able to provoke the conversation and at least provide the chance for our parents to share their thoughts. Then, by making a stand on my blog, I could place President Trump in a negative light. This is certainly political in the sense that I am placing these thoughts in a blog for the world to read.

My approach to CRSJL continues to emerge as tempered. My tendency, from past experience, is to create mutual ownership of issues. I do this so that a cooperative solution can be gained from conversation and understanding based on civility. This is frustrating and creates tension for me as a leader. There might be those who would say that what I am doing is not enough, and that if I were being a true CRSJL, I would hit everything head-on and with maximum corrective force. Indeed, I do want everything to happen faster, better, and perfectly, but if I am to be able to survive and build consensus, I feel as if my approach is warranted.

Ethic of care.

I feel most proud of this vignette even though my feelings were contentious and frustrated. To me, "Children are not red or blue" exhibits my most forward and outward efforts in showing care. Throughout this vignette, I believe that my efforts aligned best with modeling and dialogue. I modeled care by placing issues of race in the conversation in both the blog and the panel (Noddings, 2015). Within the context of fostering a discussion that included our Hispanic and Black families, dialogue was evident. Caring for strangers was the center of care that I practiced most in this story. Noddings stated, "Those who would care must attend to the other, must feel that surge of energy flowing toward the other's needs and projects. Caring is a capacity (or set of capacities) that requires cultivation. It requires time" (p. 114). During the panel discussion, my efforts to deliberately cultivate this care are evident. Then, in my blog, I created a dialogue that represented my most bold and courageous efforts in this study. When Noddings stated, "Even in genuine dialogue, the end is often uncertainty and the sort of tension that will lead to fresh and more vigorous exploration" (p. 120), I found the tension of opening the dialogue around race and immigration to be palpable.

Limitations.

Generalizability is not something that is possible with my research, nor was that the desire. Within the qualitative autoethnographic field, there are potential limitations. Different data collection methods have limits (Adams et al., 2015; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). As this study is centered around me and my experiences, data collection and analysis, there is the potential that I could be a limit based on the data that are chosen or the manner in which those points are presented or omitted. Further, as an autoethnographer, memory is an ongoing limitation (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Autoethnography involves a natural association with

researcher bias based on the narrative element of research. In order to combat bias from dominating any critique, an autoethnographer needs to maintain a vulnerable openness via authentic and believable narrative.

Conclusions

While some might say that my CRSJL practices led to surface-level success, I would say that without initial success, it is hard to build to triumph. And I would also say that attempting to study oneself attempting to be a CRSJL via autoethnography is extremely taxing. This study was conducted to provide insight to the experience, not to provide a blueprint in how to be a CRSJL. Ultimately, my desire would be to have the students at Joyner Elementary out-performing expectations, gaining access to academic language, finding a welcoming and supportive SEL environment and one where all teachers in the building find a collective efficacy. My dream would be that my leadership is one that is grounded in CRSJL and care.

The research questions guiding this study were: How are my practices as a culturally responsive social justice leader manifested in the school? What challenges do I face as I attempt to cultivate a culturally responsive social justice school climate in a culturally and linguistically diverse Hispanic environment? As I progressed through this research process, I learned the following:

1. My practices as a CRSJL were manifested mostly in the quiet individual conversations with parents, teachers, and students. And, the efforts to be a CRSJL were mostly slow-paced conversation, exploration, prompting, followed by action.
2. I identify three challenges for this study as I attempted to be a CRSJL in a CLD school. These three areas are (1) emotional toll, (2) persistence, and (3) difficultly of the change process.

Emotional toll.

This study was physically and mentally exhausting. As evidenced by the adjectives that were coded throughout the vignettes, six out of 14 categorized words hold a negative connotation. This represents approximately 43% of the words associated with the vignettes. Some of the frustration could come from the fact that I wanted the process to move along faster and with much greater depth.

Persistence.

In order to make changes to the ESOL model of instruction, it required persistence through multiple iterations, and conversations that challenged my thinking. As a CRSJL, I learned that my persistence and advocacy sometimes required me leap-frogging, or going around obstacles that I did not think should be there.

Difficulty of change.

The change process throughout this study was extremely daunting. I returned to the role of principal as I had already commenced this research. For me to undertake this study, as I was trying to establish myself as the new principal, a White male, who was trying to be caring, and to practice CRSJL, as I managed the multitude of daily tasks while also establishing a positive culture and climate was extremely daunting. There were many late nights when I wondered why I was trying to do this.

This study combined many methods that allowed me to gather insight to my social life as I attempted to lead as a CRSJL. Through a reflexive, transparent and vulnerable position, I shared my experiences through my blog. The reader was called to reflect on the experiences that I shared through my vignettes. These stories varied in approach to allow the reader access to the feelings that I had as I lived and reflected on my research. This autoethnography invited the

reader to consider the efforts that I made to be a CRSJL, while also making sense of the impact in the reader's world.

Implications.

The implications for this study are many and complex. The nature of this autoethnography involved a great deal of reflection, soul-searching, and patience. As a White male principal attempting to be a caring CRSJL in a predominantly Hispanic, high poverty school, there are implications for me. Then stepping further, there are implications for the induction and future professional development of CRSJLs. Then, there are implications for school districts. And, finally, there are implications for the general CRSJL research field.

The implication of this study leads me to cross-roads both professionally and personally. The intersection of epiphany, a painful history, and a desire to be the real me has evolved into a cathartic realization that I can be a caring CRSJL. Yet, the main question that needs to be considered is: am I willing to slog through the fight to do what is right? Doing what is right can impact me professionally and personally. I am not afraid to speak truth to a situation as I see it, yet; there is a real danger in doing that. After all, in speaking out, I could potentially upset the traditional power structure. The implication is really about self-preservation and CRSJL. The climb is slow, hard, and can be demoralizing. And at times, the efforts to be a CRSJL have impacted my family and more specifically, the relationship with my wife. Managing time and self-care would be implications that I would have to be able to get under control in order to continue carrying the mantle of becoming a better CRSJL.

Another implication rests on the challenging question about professionally developing other caring CRSJLs. For district educational leaders, the implication of this study is focused on recruitment, professional learning, and time. Interestingly, I along with other documented caring

SJL, CRSL and CRSJL leaders, came from a marginalized background. This fact might be a coincidence, yet there is merit in exploring the notion that those from marginalized experiences can better relate to marginalized students. And if this idea bears investigation, perhaps recruitment of those potential leaders should be done. I know that this idea might be problematic, based on privacy concerns, yet by speaking openly and honestly, there might be someone that steps forward to take on this fight.

If recruitment is not the answer, then certainly an implication would be to professionally develop leaders in the precepts of CRSJL. This development should be put forward in both university leadership programs as well as within school districts. Within both settings, the focus should be on understanding marginalizing conditions, implications of those conditions, and efforts to create inclusive culturally responsive and socially just settings.

Taken further at the district level, the creation of support structures should be created to aid those attempting to develop as a caring CRSJL. Then, more geared towards a central office perspective, there is a very real question that centers on Caring Theory. Are our district offices willing to consider Noddings promptings around curriculum? If our students are not interested, can we defend ignoring the moral imperative that is posed within Caring Theory? Time is a huge implication to those seeking to develop into a CRSJL. Various arguments could be made regarding the context of each person's background as an accelerant or decelerator to becoming a CRSJL. Yet, it would be foolish to believe that developing the skills of a CRSJL principal can happen overnight. The job of an educational leader is taxing based on the multitude of duties and responsibilities that go along with the job. Unless a principal could hire an entirely new staff with all of the pre-loaded skills necessary to launch a culturally responsive and socially just school, the

realities of making this happen quickly are unlikely. And, this assumes that the principal is a CRSJL. With that said, if a district is seeking to make this leap, they should do so with caution.

For the CRSJL field, future research should be focused on continuing to study practices and impacts as a pragmatic consideration. This study added to the extant literature around the topic, but much more is needed. This research should involve other CRSJL principals. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore the perceptions of those leaders over time to determine how CRSJL practices change. Do those leaders become bolder in their CRSJL practices over time? And while the nature of autoethnography is diametrically opposed to quantitative research, it would benefit the field to investigate if CRSJL has an impact on student achievement.

Discussion.

The field of educational leadership is steeped in a lofty analytic vision that is grounded in theory, posited and proven or disproved. The self-reflection of autoethnographic dreamers are left out of the conversation because there is this notion that if it can't be measured, it is of no value. Yet, the researcher cannot be extricated from the research. With all of that said, it is comforting to know that autoethnography has gained a greater footing in the world of research. In my case, I have found that what we experience in feelings, wishes and hope becomes fodder for fools or gold for the willing. For me, I have found gold through the intersection of research, theory and practice. They all collided through this autoethnography. My true CRSJL experience involved many starts and stops and will continue to be imperfect. And that imperfection has been laid bare for all who read this. My autoethnographic journey has unveiled my history, thoughts, and actions as a CRSJL into the light of day. And through this vulnerability, I do so one more time.

I am now.

I am now: a better husband, father, brother, uncle, friend.

I am now: a White male aware of my privilege and power.

I am now: an imperfect CRSJL principal.

I am now: a product of class and aware of those implications.

I am now: a CRSJL who understands what it was like growing up in a trailer.

I am now: a CRSJL who can speak openly of being in a racial majority.

I am now: a CRSL who can speak of violence and the pain caused by racial name-calling

I am now: in recognition that my pain and hurt has a name that I have spoken aloud.

I am now: more convinced than ever that public education can change the trajectory for the poor and those living on the margins.

I am now: willing to stand up and say what I believe on behalf of the children in my community.

I am now: an owner of my story.

I am now: a content zealot.

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